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# OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

## PART I



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THE  
WORLD'S ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE  
VOLUME IV

OUTLINE OF LITERATURE  
PART I

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# OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

## PART I

### I

#### THE VALUE OF A CULTURAL BACKGROUND

DURING the nineteenth century English visitors to the United States considered it their duty to point out the crudities in American life. When they returned to England they published their impressions. Perhaps the most famous of these reflections were Mrs. Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* and Dickens's *American Notes*. Both writers were amazed at the American disregard of social traditions and the lack of culture among the politically prominent and commercially successful leaders of the new Republic. The egotism of the New World and the desire for prosperity seemed to them the outstanding characteristics of the citizens of the United States. In no measured terms they ridiculed this attitude of judging position by the amount of bluster a man made or his accumulation of material goods.

Some years later Matthew Arnold, in his *Discourses in America*, endeavored to remedy this

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situation by preaching his doctrine of sweetness and light. He stressed the value of a knowledge of the civilization of the past as the basis for a well-ordered life. A person who devotes his attention exclusively to a single aim is likely to become narrow. Everyone should endeavor to increase his intelligence by giving his attention to every study which fosters the growth of the intellect. Arnold urged his audiences "to know the best which has been thought and said in the world."

Matthew Arnold's admonitions were soon forgotten because of the great advance in natural prosperity at the beginning of the twentieth century. The registration in the colleges increased greatly, but the students demanded a practical rather than a cultural education. They wished to learn how to make a living. Many graduates of high schools debated whether four years spent in gaining experience in some profitable industry would not insure greater success than four years in college. The self-made industrial leader was held up as the example to be followed. Financial importance meant success. Knowing how to earn a living was given preference to knowing how to live.

This view of life has produced the Dodsworths and Tinkers of modern fiction. To-day American writers have succeeded Mrs. Trollope and Dickens in showing how exclusive attention to

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the accumulation of wealth results in a narrow, restricted point of view. When Dodsworth and Tinker saw the famous works of art in Europe, they judged them upon the basis of their monetary value. When they listened to conversations on literature, music, and art, they were bewildered, for the names meant nothing to them. They could talk about the manufacture and merchandising of automobiles or buttons, but even in the realm of politics and current events they were beyond their depth. In the business world of competition they lived and moved and had their being. Other worlds were entirely closed to them. Sinclair Lewis and Booth Tarkington have given us exaggerated pictures of these plutocrats let loose in Europe; yet their characterizations are essentially accurate. The business man thinks he has no time for culture. It is enough if he fills his library with handsomely bound volumes of the classics, which he never opens. He has attained the semblance of culture without the essence.

At times, however, successful men who have been denied the benefits of a cultural background have realized the value of such a training. In his autobiography, *My Memories of Eighty Years*, Chauncey Depew wrote:

"In connection with this I may add that, as it has been my lot in the peculiar position which I have occupied for more than half a century as

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counsel and adviser for a great corporation and its creators and the many successful men of business who have surrounded them, I have learned to know how men who have been denied in their youth the opportunities for education feel when they are in possession of fortunes, and the world seems at their feet. Then they painfully recognize their limitations, then they know their weaknesses, then they understand that there are things which money cannot buy, and that there are gratifications and triumphs which no fortune can secure. The one lament of all those men has been: 'Oh, if I had been educated! I would sacrifice all that I have to obtain the opportunities of the college, to be able to sustain not only conversation and discussion with the educated men with whom I come in contact, but competent also to enjoy what I see is a delight to them beyond anything which I know.' "

The primary value of a cultural background is that it gives one a wider outlook upon life. We are not born into a new world. Our present civilization is built upon the civilization of the past centuries, which has been recorded by works of art and literature, the concrete expressions of the thoughts and ideas of mankind through the ages. Man's struggle to acquire a satisfying existence has been influenced by many varied factors. No one line of conduct has been pursued consistently and persistently. To understand life,

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then, we must have a knowledge of these different attempts and their success or failure because life is a complex pattern into the formation of which many strands have been woven.

The cultured man also acquires a sense of form. Whenever he obtains a new idea or learns some fact, he is able to discern its relationship to what he already knows. His mind is not a storehouse of unrelated knowledge, where he deposits stray pieces of educational furniture with the thought that sometime in the future he may need one piece or another to fill a vacant space in the room of his conversation. On the contrary, his mind is like a great Gothic Cathedral, each detail of which adds to the symmetry and grandeur of the whole structure. He has control of his mental powers and uses them to make his life more adequate. He has acquired a sense of conduct based upon a definite philosophy of life.

Perhaps the most important benefit from a cultural background is the knowledge of human nature which it gives. Since man is a gregarious animal, he must adapt himself to living contentedly with his fellows. He must take into consideration their ideas and endeavor to understand their points of view. To-day the necessity for understanding others is greater than ever before, because the world has become so much smaller that we are brought into closer contact



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not only with the different sections of our own country but also with the various nations and races. World peace depends largely upon a better understanding of the views of our neighbors. The more we know about them, the less likely are we to quarrel with them. By a study of their national characteristics as expressed in their cultures we can learn the reasons for their views. An adequate knowledge of human nature is most valuable to any man, no matter what his occupation, or social position may be.

Considering these benefits derived from a cultural background, we may define the cultured man as one who knows how the present civilization has reached its development and also understands the relationship of the various branches of knowledge to each other and to life as a whole. In this age of specialization he should know everything about some chosen occupation or profession and something about everything. He must be broad as well as deep.

If culture consists partly in a knowledge of how civilization has reached its present development, then a study of literature is one of the chief means of acquiring culture. Literature is a record of the thoughts and feelings of our predecessors and contemporaries in the world. It is the intensification and clarification of the experience of the human race by those possessing unusual insight and power. Its masterpieces ex-

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press the ideas and ideals of humanity during the ages. Authors have been particularly gifted men, who have seen more clearly and felt more deeply than their fellow men. They have understood what their age has been striving to accomplish and have been able to express that ideal for their generation.

Literature touches life at all points, for it presents a cross-section of the society of a period. It brings back the glory of Greece and the grandeur of Rome; it revives the spirit of the Middle Ages; and it reveals the trend of modern thought. The function of literature is to hold a mirror up to nature and to interpret the reflection to mankind. Literature brings us knowledge and gives us inspiration. It fosters the imagination, for as we read, we forget our immediate surroundings and live in the times about which the author writes. Thus through literature we live vicariously and learn from the experiences of others what we could never learn from our own constricted lives. Lack of time and means prevents us from discovering for ourselves much that we should like to experience.

Emerson emphasized the value of literature as a guide to culture. He said: "Consider what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civilized countries, in a thousand years, have set in best order the re-

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sults of their learning and wisdom. The men themselves were hid and inaccessible; solitary, impatient of interruptions, fenced by etiquette; but the thought which they did not uncover to their bosom friend is here written in transparent words to us, the strangers of another age."

A consideration of the thoughts of others stimulates our own thinking. We endeavor to foresee the consequences of a certain action upon the part of the characters in a novel or biography. We try to solve the problems presented by the author or to determine the outcome of the story. We wonder what we should do were we placed in a similar situation. After a time we become critical in our attitude and pass judgment upon the plausibility of events, the truth in character portrayal, and the accuracy of expression. Literature provides material for thought by recalling to the mind truths we have already discovered and by presenting new ideas to us. The business man who reads good literature will find that his brain is on the alert. He will become less and less dependent upon the opinions of others, for he will have acquired a store of information upon which to base his judgment and a method by which he may solve his problems. Education is merely training the mind to do individual thinking, a rare accomplishment characterizing the leaders of a people.

To be of their greatest value ideas must be

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given forceful expression. Often a man hesitates to express his thoughts because he lacks adequate words to convey his meaning. He fails to impress others because he cannot express himself clearly and precisely. Again literature will be an aid to him. Constant communion with the masters of style will give him a feeling for words. He will increase his vocabulary and develop a style of his own so that he will never be at a loss for words to express his opinions simply and directly. In reading, a person should cultivate the habit of noticing words and should endeavor to determine their effectiveness. Everyone admires a good talker, for he is entertaining as well as informative.

Finally, literature offers a source of recreation for leisure hours. If a person enjoys reading, he need never want for amusement. He has at his beck and call entertainers of every type and nationality. In his more serious moments he can command the services of the historian, the essayist, and the poet. When he is in a lighter mood, the teller of stories, the novelist, and the dramatist will help him to forget his worries. The biographer and the critic will appeal to a mood between two extremes. A tired business man can find a book for every mood and every need. Literature offers him a portrayal of life felt intensely and interpreted understandingly.

Therefore, a man who has a cultural back-

ground obtained largely through a study of literature will understand life more thoroughly and enjoy it more fully. He will be able to live more peaceably with his fellow men because he will understand more clearly their characters and desires.

He will acquire a wider outlook and a deeper vision. He can escape from his daily routine and wander at will in the realms of his imagination. In this age of intensive specialization a man will find that he must estimate the value of a cultural background not in dollars and cents but in terms of that more enduring form of wealth which makes life worth living—true happiness.

## II.

### THE LETTER

THE letter is the only form of composition which everyone has written; yet few persons write good letters. They hesitate to put down their intimate thoughts or fail to consider the interests of the persons to whom they are writing. Consequently most letters are dry chronicles of more or less unimportant occurrences without enlivening comment. Too many personal letters are written as tho they were business communications carefully composed so as to produce a desired effect. The personal letter should be a presentation of personal affairs and ideas to an interested correspondent. Stevenson indicated the lack of restraint which should characterize personal letters. "I begin to see the whole scheme of letter-writing; you sit down and pour out an equable stream of twaddle." The successful letter-writer informs his correspondent of his doings and chats easily, as tho his friend were present.

Such letters are most diverting reading because they reveal the characters of both the writer and his correspondent. As they are not written for publication, they permit the reader to gain some conception of the intimate life of

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the writer. Famous men have not hesitated to express to their intimate friends opinions which they would never have revealed to the general public. Thus we may look behind the scenes and listen to gossip, indiscretions, and revelations not meant for our ears.

The letters of Marcus Tullius Cicero are a veritable social and political history of the last days of the Roman Republic. At this period Cicero was an active politician striving to defend the Republic from its numerous enemies. By nature and training he was a conservative and a member of the aristocratic party headed by Pompey. Yet he admired Cæsar as a man and hoped by an attitude of moderation to reconcile these leaders. This attitude caused him to be suspected by both parties; consequently the opponents of Cæsar did not confide in him. He expressed his regret in a letter to Cassius beginning, "Oh that you had invited me to that glorious feast you exhibited on the ides of March!" and warned the aristocratic party against Antony, whom he called "the plunger."

The most entertaining of the letters were written to Cicero's friend Atticus, a wealthy patron of the arts, who lived in Greece for twenty years. The letters reveal the true character of Cicero, for he said, "I speak to you as I do to myself." We must, however, remember in reading them that they reflect the feelings of

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the moment and are not the result of careful consideration. Cicero rails against the dulness of provincial life, commiserates himself upon his exile from Rome, describes the affairs of the Republic, divulges his opinions of the leaders, and bemoans his financial difficulties.

Cicero's family letters indicate that his married life was not a happy one. His letters to his wife are most artificial in tone; they sound like the efforts of an orator to move an audience. A growing coldness of tone becomes apparent in the later letters, for his wife was not concerned with the ambitions of her husband. Finally Cicero divorced her after thirty-two years and married his young ward. His son, Marcus, also caused him considerable worry. The boy was enjoying wild parties in Athens and spending money lavishly rather than attending to his studies. It is interesting to note that in Rome of 50 B. C. the problem of "these wild young people" was troubling the elders. Cicero gives the boy good advice and admonishes him to prepare himself for a successful career. Twentieth century fathers will find in these letters some excellent hints for their boys at college. Cicero's daughter, Tullia, seems to have been a most admirable girl from the references to her. Possibly she was the only person he really loved.

The style of the letters is essentially oratorical, with frequent exaggerations of sentiment to



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secure an effect. Thus he writes effusively to his wife, Terentia, when he is in exile. "But I must lay down my pen a few moments. My tears flow too fast to suffer me to proceed." Scattered through the letters are Greek words and quotations from Latin and Greek authors. Occasionally Cicero lapsed into colloquial expressions and a lighter tone, but he rarely forgot his training as a rhetorician. His letters were a model for the golden age of the art of letter-writing in eighteenth-century France and England.

Because of their inclusion in the canon of the *New Testament*, the letters of St. Paul have attained a wider general recognition than those of any other classical letter-writer. St. Paul was the most learned of the early leaders of the church, and hence became the expositor of Christianity. He did for the teachings of Christ what Plato did for the teachings of Socrates. Neither of these great teachers committed any of his views to writing. It was left for their followers to interpret the words of their masters and to build up from these words a definite system of philosophy. Paul's success and popularity made him the authority to which the early churches turned when they met the difficulties of dissension within and persecution without. He advised them and admonished them to steadfastness in the faith. He encouraged them by giving accounts of his own sufferings and held out the

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promise of eternal life to the faithful. He warned them against false teachers, who were trying to cause trouble in the congregations, for he knew the faithful would be able to withstand oppression only by unity and a spirit of brotherly love. His use of the balanced sentence and climax makes his style epigrammatic and extremely quotable.

Another classical letter-writer, who has gained fame because of his detailed descriptions of Roman life, is Pliny the Younger. As the adopted son of Pliny the Elder, he occupied an enviable position in Roman society. In his eighteenth year occurred the eruption of Vesuvius, which he vividly described in one of his letters. He was exceedingly conceited and never missed an opportunity to show his intellectual attainments, his coolness in danger, and his ability to manage his affairs. He delighted to narrate his daily doings on his estates as tho every minor act must be of supreme interest to his correspondent. When he was military tribune in Syria, he wrote a famous letter to the Emperor Trajan, asking how he should treat the accusations against the Christians. Since Pliny wrote the letters in a polished style, he clearly intended them for publication. Nevertheless, they are a valuable source for the social life of an educated man of refined tastes during the best days of the Roman Empire.

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Two women ushered in the golden age of letter-writing. They were Madame de Sévigné in France and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in England. Madame de Sévigné had received an excellent education at a time when women were supposed to have little ability for intellectual pursuits. At eighteen she married and had a son and daughter before her faithless husband was killed in a duel. She had little regard for her son but was devoted to her daughter, who was apparently very much annoyed by the mother's excessive attentions. This daughter, Françoise Marguerite, married the Comte de Grignan and went to Provence, where her husband was Lieutenant-Governor. The majority of Madame de Sévigné's 1079 letters informed the Comtesse in a gay, witty, and exuberant style of the happenings at the court of Louis XIV. Because of her charming personality and brilliant conversation she was an intimate friend of most of the distinguished persons of her time. Anecdotes and gossip concerning them enliven her letters. She reveled in details and loved to keep her reader in suspense by animated teasing. The keynote of her letters is found in her remark about a famous engagement: "What glorious matter for talk!"

Like Madame de Sévigné, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu contracted an unhappy marriage with an attractive but tantalizing husband, from

## THE LETTER

whom she later separated. Her letters may be divided into two groups, those written when she went to Constantinople with her husband and those commenting on the books her daughter sent her while she was living on the Continent. On her travels and during her stay in Turkey, Lady Mary observed accurately the customs of the people. She noted particularly the differences from the English point of view. As her purpose was to avail herself of every opportunity for entertaining her friends, her lively, clear descriptions of her first impressions of the places she visited give us an excellent picture of the hardships and methods of traveling in the eighteenth century. Her frank wit and keen sense of humor also helped to make her reputation as the most renowned English woman of her day. In her later letters her critical ability is evident, for she made shrewd comments on the early English novels.

Perhaps the most famous letters written during the eighteenth century are those of Lord Chesterfield. After two years at Cambridge, Chesterfield had taken the grand tour of Europe. He came home fired with the ambition to shine in society by means of a diplomatic career. In his schemes for political preferment he failed, because he had the fatal habit of paying court to the wrong person. His attempt to appease the neglected Johnson by praising the *Dictionary* in

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two papers in one of the periodicals of the day met with a dignified rebuff. In spite of his failure to attain the position he desired, Chesterfield was not discouraged. If he could not be the "ideal statesman and ideal polished man of society," his illegitimate son should be. In the letters, written to the boy while he was touring Europe under the care of a tutor, Chesterfield advised him in the arts and subterfuges of diplomacy, gave him instruction in every subject from the correct manner of walking across a ball-room floor to the proper style for a document of state, and preached a thoroughly pagan philosophy of self-advancement. This philosophy was derived largely from the works of Voltaire, which Chesterfield had introduced to England. He warned the boy to conceal his feelings by assuming a calm indifference, no matter what might happen. Advocating such a philosophy, it is not strange that the letters should show no personal affection, but be merely "what one man of the world would write to another." They are pedantic and didactic in tone; they often sound like lectures on etiquette or conduct. Yet they contain an enormous number of pertinent sentences showing Chesterfield's penetrating knowledge of human nature. Dr. Johnson's comment on his volume of letters, "Take out the immorality, and it should be put into the hands of every

## THE LETTER

young gentleman," applies as well to-day as in the eighteenth century.

Besides the letter to Chesterfield, Dr. Johnson wrote many letters worth reading. Even in his friendly notes his customary dignity and sternness are evident. Johnson was essentially a moral philosopher; he, therefore, seized every opportunity to enunciate a moral truth.

The most delightful of English letter-writers in this century was Horace Walpole. As the son of a famous prime minister he had an entrée to diplomatic and social circles. He had no desire to be a participant in affairs but was satisfied to be merely an observer. Since he hated dulness, he cultivated the art of finding pleasure in doing as he pleased. Because of this characteristic he has been considered a dilettante; yet he industriously pursued each interest as long as it lasted. He was a collector not only of news but also of gossip. His letters give us a minute and realistic record of the intrigues and accomplishments of a distinctly social age, with its artificiality and cynicism.

The peace of rustic life in the eighteenth century is revealed in the letters of William Cowper, the English poet and hymn-writer. Cowper had retired to the country on account of ill health. The apparently unimportant events of a quiet existence become most entertaining in his simply

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written letters. He wrote to please himself, with no concern as to effect.

The change from the ease and satisfaction of the eighteenth century to the problems and speculations of the nineteenth is reflected in the more serious tone assumed by the letter-writers. Reflections upon conditions replace the gossipy anecdotes. Charles Lamb may be considered the connecting link between the two periods. His letters are filled with nonsense and humorous exaggerations. Yet he often discusses his opinions with the famous literary men of the period, who were charmed by his winning personality. By reading these letters we can recreate that famous circle.

Some of the writers of the nineteenth century corresponded with each other or with members of their families concerning the principles of their craft. They drew illustrations of their points from the works of their predecessors and even explained and criticized their own works. They were concerned with the general state of literature as a reflection of the cultural standards of their times. These letter-writers may be roughly classified into two groups, those who believed that literature should be subjective, that is, based upon and expressing their personal experiences and feelings, and those who believed that the writer should be objective, an observer of the life about him. The most famous corre-

## THE LETTER

spondence resulting from this controversy was that of George Sand and Gustave Flaubert. Sand had retired to Nohant after an exciting career, which she had reproduced in her novels; Flaubert was living on his estate at Croisset, toiling to express perfectly his ideas. She was an optimist with a philosophy based upon the resigned acceptance of fortune or misfortune as it came. He was a pessimist grumbling against the cruelty of existence. She advocated writing from the heart; he from the mind. The letters supply us with an excellent exposition of the differences between the romantic and realistic schools of writing.

John Keats's letters to his family not only discuss the progress of his work but also present his longing for a life of sensations. These letters should be read for a more complete understanding of his poetry, since they contain the same qualities.

Another exceptionally interesting collection of family letters are those written by Matthew Arnold. In his early letters to his mother he tells how he spends his days, comments upon the people he meets, bemoans the fact that he must fulfil his duties as inspector of schools by writing reports when he would much rather be writing poetry, and discusses his own poetry with remarkable fairness. Later he wrote to his children descriptions of his travels and accounts of the re-



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ception given to his lectures in America. The Arnold family must have been a most congenial one, for these letters show a spirit of mutual regard and affection.

The Russian authors of the last half of the nineteenth century felt the need of raising the cultural standard of the Russian people. Thus they took their work most seriously. Anton Chekhov preached culture and stressed the necessity for a writer to be objective with the aim of depicting truth. In his letters to his cousin, Countess Alexandrine, Tolstoy, the Russian philosopher and novelist, enunciated his theories and confessed his personal struggles. He once said, "My best biography is to be found in my letters to Alexandrine." Maxim Gorky's letters are generally retrospective upon modern Russia, but they give us some very keen judgments of his contemporaries, particularly of Tolstoy.

One of the most difficult tasks confronting the letter-writer is to adapt himself perfectly to the circumstances of his reader. Too often he becomes so engrossed in his own affairs that he fails to remember the position of his correspondent. This failure is very likely to occur when one is writing to children. C. L. Dodgson, who under the pen name of Lewis Carroll wrote that delightful children's book, *Alice in Wonderland*, often formed friendships with his young acquaintances by sending them a copy of *Alice*

## THE LETTER

accompanied by a short letter. In an amusing and graceful manner he called to their attention some incident of his meeting with them. Another writer who understood childhood because he always retained his boyish enthusiasm was Theodore Roosevelt. His *Letters to His Children* show how thoroughly he entered their lives and how perfectly he could adapt himself to their point of view.

In the realm of adult letter-writing this power of adaptation is eminently shown in the letters of Abraham Lincoln and Robert Louis Stevenson. Lincoln's simplicity, sincerity, and ability to find the appropriate word for the occasion constitute the secret of his success as a letter-writer. Whether he was sympathizing with a bereaved mother or explaining his policy to an opponent, he wrote directly and effectively. Stevenson also adapted his style to the position and circumstances of his correspondent. He had the ability to describe vividly his experiences on his travels. In striking language he set before his readers in a humorous and sometimes ironic tone his reflections upon life in the South Seas.

The reader will also find much of interest and value in numerous other letters besides those considered in the foregoing pages, provided he has some knowledge of the writers and the age in which the letters were written. As letters are intimate chronicles of experiences and feelings,

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they offer more enjoyment to the person acquainted with the lives of the writers than to the casual reader. The letters of Joseph Addison, Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray, Benjamin Franklin, Voltaire, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Southey, Edward Fitzgerald, Thomas Carlyle, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, James Russell Lowell, Alfred Tennyson, and the Brownings may be recommended in addition to the more famous collections discussed in this chapter.

### III

#### BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

FROM the time of Plutarch to the time of Ludwig, biography has held its place as a most popular form of reading. It gives us the opportunity of becoming acquainted with adventurous spirits, who have seemed to accomplish miracles. We like to know, moreover, how a person has met his difficulties, how he has molded circumstances by the force of his personality, how he has gained his position in the world, and how he has reacted toward others. The reader feels encouraged when he learns that others have had problems similar to his own.

A good biography presents a man as he lived. It is neither a eulogy nor an indictment. It recounts both good and bad actions, giving a fair, unbiased view, so that we may know the subject as he was. It should also show his relationship to his surroundings, for a man's attitude toward life is greatly influenced by his environment. Many men have reached eminence because they were able to recognize the opportunities offered them by particular circumstances. A good biography reveals a man's personality by chronicling his minor actions, the minute details of his daily life, anecdotes about

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nim, clever or apt sayings, his likes and dislikes. Seldom is a man's true personality shown in the great achievements of his career. How he conducts himself with his family and most intimate friends marks the type of man he really is.

If a man would be entirely frank about himself, he could write his own biography better than anyone else. Yet an autobiography is likely to be more distorted than a biography, for in writing his own life a person endeavors to make a favorable impression. He desires that the world shall know him as a courageous man, a shrewd business man, or some other enviable type. Therefore, he conceals some facts and exaggerates others. Yet by this very method he reveals to his readers his true character.

The hardest task confronting a biographer is that of selection of material. He must exercise rare judgment so that he will not omit any essential facts yet will not clutter his work with insignificant details. After he has spent years in collecting material about his subject, his judgment is likely to be warped. If he is not extremely careful, he will produce a dry chronicle useful for reference but not entertaining for reading. Instead of giving a clear portrait of his subject, he will leave in the reader's mind a confused picture. Biographies and autobiographies, then, should be judged by the ability of

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their authors to make their subjects live before the eyes of the reader.

The most famous biographer of Greek literature is Plutarch, who aimed to teach a moral lesson by writing the lives of illustrious Greeks and Romans. His *Parallel Lives* are character sketches of analogous figures, such as Cicero and Demosthenes, Alexander and Cæsar. He makes no attempt to analyze his subjects or account for their actions. Rather he has given us a series of dramatic incidents about men active in public life. He was a Bœotian, who had studied philosophy in Athens and had later lectured in Rome. Hence, through his understanding of both civilizations, he was able to present accurately the contrasting attitudes of his subjects toward life. He quotes from authorities, includes anecdotes, relates gossip, interprets dreams and portents, explains origins of various customs, and occasionally digresses into philosophical discussions. Since Shakespeare obtained a large part of his information concerning Cæsar, Brutus, Antony, and his other Greek and Roman characters from Sir Thomas North's translation, Plutarch's portrayal of these figures has given many of us our notions concerning them. In the seventeenth century Dryden supervised another translation, which was later revised by Arthur Hugh Clough. The *Lives* have thus always enjoyed popularity with English readers.

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The *Confessions of St. Augustine* is the outstanding biography in Latin literature. After a worldly youth, Augustine was converted to Christianity through the influence of his mother, Monica. In his autobiography he regrets his misspent youth and pays tribute to the saving power of Christianity. At times he bores his readers with theological discussions, but his accounts of the struggles of the early Christians are wonderfully vivid.

The spirit of adventure and intrigue dominating the Italian Renaissance forms the main thread of the *Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*. By profession Cellini was a goldsmith and sculptor, whose masterpiece, *Perseus*, may still be seen in Florence. Among his patrons were Pope Clement VII, Francis I of France, and Duke Cosimo de Medici. Yet Cellini was always in difficulty, for by avocation he was an adventurer. In an astonishingly frank manner he tells us about his trials, triumphs, jealousies, plots, and revenges. He seems to have fought most of the men of the time and to have loved all the women he had the fortune to meet. He bragged about his conquests as a lover; he exaggerated his prowess as a man of arms; he acclaimed himself as a great artist. He was high-strung and impetuous, acting upon the impulse of the moment. But the *Autobiography* is more than a record of his experiences. It is a colorful

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picture of the life of sixteenth-century Italy, for Cellini had the opportunity to learn many of the secrets of the great.

Another Italian biographer of the sixteenth century who deserves mention, not so much on account of his literary ability as because of his personal acquaintance with his subjects, is Giorgio Vasari. His *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* contains reminiscences of the great artists who worked during the Italian Renaissance, and comments upon their works. Robert Browning derived from this work information for some of the poems in his *Men and Women*.

The eighteenth-century biographies were generally written to explain how, by their distinctive personalities, the subjects came to occupy their respective positions in the life of their times. In reading these biographies we watch the personalities develop as they are influenced by circumstances. In England, James Boswell had attached himself to the great literary dictator, Samuel Johnson, with the avowed purpose of writing the life of this important figure. Johnson was aware of this purpose and supplied Boswell with facts concerning his early life. At times he was probably annoyed by Boswell's somewhat irritating questions, but he tolerated his biographer and even was amused by Boswell's schemes to arouse him. The biography,



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resulting from Boswell's perseverance and passion for accurately preserving life, emphasizes Dr. Johnson's wide knowledge by recording his conversations. When Boswell wrote, "To me his conversation seems more admirable than his writing," he indicated the main characteristic of his work. The reader should learn Dr. Johnson's views from his own lips. *The Life of Samuel Johnson* is a complete, accurate, impartial, and intimate account of the relationship of the lexicographer to the famous group gathered about him.

In 1781 Dr. Johnson was asked to write the *Lives of the Poets*. Many of his poets are unimportant in the history of English letters, but Johnson knew them personally and felt kindly toward them. The lives are the most readable of Johnson's works, because in them his style is at its best. He is recalling interesting stories about friends of his early, struggling days, rather than seeking to teach a moral. Augustine Birrell said, "For sensible men the world offers no better reading than *The Lives of the Poets*."

In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin explains for the benefit of his son how he gained success in the various ventures of his early life. In a letter to a friend he said that he hoped the biography "would be of use to young readers, exemplifying the effects of prudent and imprudent conduct in the commencement of a life

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of business." He tells about his industry in his profession of printing, his errors and temptations, his plans for the welfare of Philadelphia, and his habit of drawing lessons from his experiences. Franklin's philosophy was a practical one reflecting his common sense. Unfortunately, he concluded his *Autobiography* with the year 1757; therefore we do not have his reactions to the part he played in the Revolution and the early days of the American Republic. The book, nevertheless, is one that every American boy should read.

The great literary figure of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Germany was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. His *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*) discloses the influences which molded his life and provided him with material for his books. As he was inclined to be rather impressionable and somewhat romantic, he had a series of affecting love affairs, which he fondly narrates. But *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is more than merely a record of Goethe's personal affairs; it is a history of eighteenth-century literature and thought in Germany as a background for her greatest man of letters. The opinions of the elderly Goethe are recorded in *Conversations with Eckermann*, who was a kind of Boswell to Goethe. Eckermann, however, lacked Boswell's ability and failed to make his

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hero a living personality. His Goethe is rather a venerable oracle.

During the nineteenth century biographies increased in popularity, until to-day several have reached the rank of best sellers. Every prominent person has written his reminiscences or has been the subject for a life. New estimates of historical figures have brought them down from their pedestals and humanized them. We may become familiar with the careers of authors, artists, musicians, scientists, scholars, professional men, religious leaders, politicians, statesmen, warriors, and successful captains of industry or society. Many of these books have little literary value; a few of them, however, have qualities of style or interpretation which distinguish them.

John Gibson Lockhart's monumental *Life of Sir Walter Scott* is practically an edition of Scott's diaries and letters by a devoted son-in-law, who had the ability to comprehend the emotions which actuated the Scotch novelist. George Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay* has been called a "perfect interweaving of biography and history." Other notable biographies of literary men and women are John Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Hamlin Garland's *A Son of the Middle Border*, William H. Hudson's *Far Away and Long Ago*, Emil Ludwig's *Goethe*, Mark Twain's *Autobiography*, I. L. Tolstoy's *Reminiscences of*

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*Tolstoy*, Anthony Trollope's *Autobiography*, Sidney Lee's *Life of William Shakespeare*, Cardinal Newman's *Apologia*, Amy Lowell's *Life of John Keats*, Lewis Browne's *That Man Heine*, and P. B. Wyndham Lewis's *François Villon*. Two popular fictionized biographies are Maurois's *Ariel*, based on Shelley's life, and Mrs. Barrington's *Glorious Apollo*, a vivid portrait of Byron.

Biographies of men active in political life are frequently complete histories of their periods, because of their dominating influence upon events. As a result of his researches while he was ambassador to Spain, Washington Irving wrote *The Life and Voyages of Columbus*. This book and the *Life of Washington* are distinguished more by Irving's literary charm than by their historical value. Thomas Carlyle, on the other hand, applies his keen insight to the interpretation of the attitude of his heroes toward the times in which they lived. He wrote biography upon the formula that "History is the essence of innumerable biographies." He had the ability to show how an apparently insignificant detail might be the turning point in a career. His *Frederick the Great* emphasizes so strongly Frederick's patriotism that it was used as a text-book in the military schools of Germany. His *Oliver Cromwell* is a vindication of the leader of the commonwealth.

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Lord Charnwood's *Lincoln* and *Roosevelt* should be widely read by Americans, for the author has explained the English attitude toward the policies of these two Presidents. Furthermore, he has shown an excellent understanding of the men themselves. It is well for us to have such an unbiased estimate of our outstanding figures. Senator Albert J. Beveridge's unfinished *Life of Abraham Lincoln* and Carl Sandburg's *The Prairie Years* are two recent estimates of the Great Emancipator from an American point of view.

Emil Ludwig, André Maurois, and G. Lytton Strachey have subjected several famous historical figures to the new biographical method of stressing the dominating motives, often selfish ones, which have determined actions. Hence these figures have become far more human and interesting than they were in the older life-and-letters form of biography. Ludwig has chosen *Napoleon* and *Bismarck*; Maurois, *Disraeli*; and Strachey, *Queen Victoria* and *Elizabeth and Essex*. In *Aspects of Biography*, Maurois discusses the characteristics of modern biography, showing that the purpose of the author in this informal method is to explain accurately the character of his subject.

From the biographies of men of science, two may be chosen as representative. They are Huxley's *Autobiography* and René Vallery-Radot's

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*Life of Pasteur.* To both might be applied a sentence from a criticism of the latter: "This is a biography for young men of science, and for others who may wish to learn what science has done, and may do, for humanity."

Biographies of business men have in general little literary value. They either stress the marvelous rise of some poor boy to a position of prominence or expose the methods by which a leader has gained control of some industry. Perhaps the most popular representative of this class of biography is *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, an autobiography, which proclaims Bok's success and points out the opportunities in modern America for an industrious, observing youth. In *Twice Thirty* Bok further explains the lessons derived from his experience. Since advertising is one of the most potent forces in modern business, the story of the development of an advertising executive as told in Ernest Elmo Calkins's *Louder, Please*, should be of general interest.

It is appropriate to close this chapter on biography with brief mention of *The Education of Henry Adams*, since Adams reviews the tendencies in modern life. As a member of an important Boston family he received the usual cultural education. After graduation from Harvard, he turned his attention to history and produced a remarkably sympathetic study of the

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Middle Ages in *Mont Saint-Michel and Chartres*. A comparison of the unity in the life of the Middle Ages with the complexity in modern life led him to the conclusion that his formal education had been a failure. *The Education of Henry Adams* not only explains how he acquired an understanding of life, but also gives a most intelligent discussion of the trend of the times.

## IV

### DIARIES AND MEMOIRS

DIARIES and books of memoirs may be distinguished from biographies by their more intimate tone. They deal with personal affairs and opinions concerning events or contemporaries. They record insignificant trifles in an amusing manner, for they give the spontaneous reflections of the moment. The diary is a silent confidant, to whom the secrets of the heart may be divulged without fear of having them revealed, unless the writer decides to leave his diary for posterity. Hence the diarist is not constrained by self-consciousness. He records the indiscretions of himself or others; he comments upon his associates; he lays bare his own personality. As the writer concentrates upon his own doings, a diary is likely to reflect egotism and vanity. When one is continuously setting down his daily actions as tho they were of great moment, he cannot help but impress his work with an air of conceit.

To write a satisfactory diary a person must have extraordinary perseverance, because he must not allow a day to pass without its entry. A diary which is written up spasmodically lacks the vigor and freshness of one written daily.



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What is vitally significant to-day may be forgotten in a week. A diary should record current impressions, not pondered opinions.

The writer of memoirs is not so frank as the diarist, but he is just as personal. He is endeavoring to recall incidents which will throw light on the characters of famous persons whom he has known. He describes diverting situations and recalls bits of gossip. Whenever possible, he recreates the scenes of the past, reliving the moments he has spent in entertaining company. Naturally, his work is full of anecdotes, clever repartee, and astounding revelations. Distance has lent a particular glamor to his former experiences.

Sir Arthur Ponsonby is an authority on the art of diary-writing. In three volumes he has described with representative selections English, Scotch, and Irish diaries, written by men of all professions and stations in life. Among the most notable are John Evelyn, the secretary of the Royal Society and friend of Pepys; John Wesley, the founder of Methodism; Fanny Burney, an eighteenth-century novelist, who was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Charlotte; Henry Crabb Robinson, a most voluminous writer of literary *Reminiscences* as well as of his *Diaries*, which covered the years 1811-1867; and Fulke Greville, who, as clerk of the privy council from

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1821-1859, knew many political and social secrets of his day.

But the English diary which surpasses all diaries in its interest and lively style is that of Samuel Pepys. During the first nine years of Charles II's reign (1660-1669) Pepys noted down valuable information about affairs of state gained from his position in the navy office, descriptions of the plague and great fire, the prices he paid for food and clothing, the current gossip, his opinions about the Restoration plays, his love for music, his attentions to pretty women, his quarrels with his wife, and his sundry decisions to reform his way of life. The people, the pleasures, the business, and the most intimate details concerning Restoration life are the subjects of a pen which knew no reticence. Pepys found the world a gay place of unexpected adventure, too entertaining to be allowed to pass without due commemoration. He also was blessed with a quaint humor, which enlivens his pages. He could laugh at his own follies as well as at those of his friends. Thanks to Pepys, we can reconstruct a picture of daily life in the reign of Charles II, even to what was eaten and drunk.

Jonathan Swift's *Journal to Stella*, a series of daily letters to Esther Johnson, does in a much less detailed fashion for the early years of the eighteenth century what Pepys did for

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the Restoration. It contains characterizations of his political and literary acquaintances, accounts of petty intrigues, and trifles of gossip. Swift shows his devotion by his solicitous inquiries concerning Esther's occupations and by his use of "little language." The *Journal* reveals the more human and affectionate side of the great satirist.

The French have always had considerable renown as writers of particularly frank memoirs. These have often been a defense of the writers' own actions during periods of political disturbances, or somewhat vicious attacks on their enemies by exposing them to ridicule. Cardinal de Retz explained his opposition to Richelieu and Mazarin. Even tho he was harassed by imprisonment and enormous debts, he struggled against circumstances like a hero of the classical drama. The portrayal of this dramatic struggle raises his *Memoirs* above the level of numerous similar books in seventeenth-century French literature.

The brilliant court of Louis XIV was considered by Louis de Rouvroy de Saint-Simon a bourgeois court, for Saint-Simon always remembered that he was a peer of France descended from Charlemagne. His twenty-one volumes of *Memoirs* reflect this attitude. He is not accurate as to details, but he does paint a graphic picture of the age. The persons of the court, from

the King and Mme. de Maintenon to the least important figure, are delineated by this keen observer, who scorned much that he was forced to tolerate.

The chief quality of the most famous memoirs of eighteenth-century France is sentiment. Altho an Italian, Giacomo Casanova de Seingalt wrote in French concerning his adventures and love affairs. Casanova sought amusement in every country of Europe with no regard for conventions. He is a veritable eighteenth-century Cellini, even to his frank revelation of his escapades. Rousseau's *Confessions* is another frank presentation of "what was laudable and wicked" in his life. He had a tendency to exaggerate and sentimentalize upon his experiences, so that he frequently mingled fiction with fact. At times the reader is astonished and even disgusted at the completeness with which he bares his "inmost soul."

But the prince of French sentimentalists is François René Auguste de Chateaubriand. Wherever he went, he looked upon life with a romantic eye ever ready to be emotionally impressed. The mystery of the East, the peace of the English countryside, the glory of Niagara, and the grandeur of the American forests offered adequate material for his meditations. Throughout his *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* runs a sentimental melancholy, which seems to be largely

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a pose. In a colorful style with considerable dramatic quality he analyzed his emotions and philosophized upon his experiences. His romantic tendency, derived to some extent from Rousseau, exerted considerable influence upon Hugo and Byron. He felt that no one could fully appreciate his raptures or understand his sorrows.

Another French diarist, brought to the attention of English readers by Mrs. Humphry Ward's translation of selections from his *Journal Intime* (1848-1881) and by Matthew Arnold's essay, was Henri François Amiel, professor of philosophy at Geneva. Amiel expressed nostalgia for the past, mused philosophically concerning the infinite, and criticized literature and society. Arnold pointed out that the diary was more valuable for its criticism than for its philosophy.

The scandals and foibles of French literary men during the last half of the nineteenth century are exposed in the *Journal des Goncourt*, published by Edmond after the death of his brother Jules. As the brothers held a prominent position in Parisian society for a long period, and as they were members of the naturalistic school of fiction, they did not hesitate to speak plainly. The *Journal*, therefore, caused a sensation at its publication.

The outstanding writer of memoirs in German literature is the romantic poet, Heinrich

Heine. His *Traveling Sketches* and *Memoirs* are a series of impressions of the places and peoples he visited. After 1831 Heine lived in France, a more congenial country than his native Germany, for he was a "child of the French Revolution." In his *Memoirs* he cleverly burlesqued the faults and national traits he observed in his travels by exaggerating the characteristics of the various peoples. At times he became positively malignant in his satire against German conservatism. His *Memoirs* also reveal his susceptibility to the influence of women. He was extremely sensitive and suffered much from the conflict between Judaism and Hellenism in his nature.

Recently the diaries of Count Tolstoy and those of his wife have been published in English. These diaries throw considerable light upon the conflicting elements in the Russian novelist's character, especially during his unsettled youth. Countess Tolstoy bewails the indifference of her husband to his affairs and to the welfare of their children during his later years when he was devoting himself to theology. Apparently the Russian philosopher was a hard man to live with, because he was so self-centered. We gather that he did not practise at home the doctrine of brotherly love which he preached in his stories.

For those interested in Russian life during

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the nineteenth century two other diaries by less well-known authors may be mentioned. Serge Aksakov published in 1856 his *Family Chronicle*, a record of life during his childhood. A critic of Russian Literature writes concerning this diary: "It is impossible to put the narrative down after once beginning it, and I have heard of children who read it like a fairy-tale." Life in Russian towns in the forties is described by Alexander Herzen in his *Memories and Thoughts*. From 1847 until his death in 1870 Herzen lived in Paris and London, where he wrote pamphlets advocating socialism. Hence the *Memories* contains comments upon the revolutionary movements of the middle nineteenth century in Europe.

Marie Bashkirtseff's sentimental diary produced a sensation when it was published in 1887. It is written in French and shows the influence of French thought upon the imaginative mind of a young Russian girl, for Marie died at the age of twenty-four. Its pathos is most appealing.

Recently, selections from the journals of two New England writers have been edited under the titles, *The Heart of Emerson's Journals* and *The Heart of Thoreau's Journals*. These books, together with Thoreau's *Walden*, reflect the views current in nineteenth-century New England. Emerson called his journals his "Saving Banks," in which he stored thoughts as they

occurred to him for future use in his essays and addresses. Often his comments on events and acquaintances are most shrewd. Thoreau's descriptions of nature and studies of the creatures of the woods are remarkable for their accurate details. Both men were given to philosophizing, but Thoreau was the more homely philosopher.

From this consideration of a few representative diaries, it is evident that any diary, no matter what its literary value, will yield entertainment. If you try to read a diary from beginning to end, however, it soon becomes boring, because the writer is diffuse and frequently repeats opinions. Diaries should be opened haphazardly and read casually.



## V

### THE HISTORIANS

A HISTORIAN may chronicle events in a dull and uninspired manner, or he may recreate the spirit of a period with illuminating detail. He may even include hearsay and anecdotes which he has not verified. He may endeavor to determine the accuracy of his sources and to select the most reliable, or he may accept conflicting accounts and set down everything he learns, allowing the reader to choose the most plausible version. He may concern himself with campaigns and battles, with political movements, or with social developments. He may lay emphasis upon the lessons to be derived from a study of history, or he may desire to laud the glories of his nation. He may have taken active part in the story he is telling. He may, on the other hand, be a student viewing events from a distance. In the following pages we shall consider historians of every type. Those here presented, however, all have one characteristic in common: they have written their accounts in an entertaining manner.

Herodotus, "the Father of History," was born in Asia Minor in the fifth century B. C. He traveled in the Near East, Egypt, and Greece.

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resided at Athens, and spent his last years in a Greek colony in Italy. Thus he was fairly well acquainted with the then-known world. Wherever he went, he asked questions concerning strange customs, and gathered stories, sometimes extremely fabulous, concerning historical events. He included even the most absurd tales in his work with the remark, "I must tell the tale as it was told to me, but I am not bound to believe it all." The most stirring event of his age was the Persian Wars, concluded shortly before he was born. The triumph of Greece over its Eastern enemy is the climax of his history. He led up to this event, however, by briefly recounting the early history of Sparta and Athens; the rise and fall of Cræsus, the rich king of Lydia; the expansion of the Persian Empire under Cyrus; Cambyse's Expedition to Egypt; and the early conquests of Darius. Then with dramatic intensity he described the invasion of Greece with the courageous stand at Marathon as the turning point. Altho Herodotus admired tremendously the courage of the Greeks, he did not hesitate to criticize them. In fact, he seemed to credit fate with an important hand in the matter. He believed that it was the will of the gods that the successful should be humbled.

The modern reader finds the digressions the most entertaining part of the history. Herodotus could never resist an impulse to explain how a

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custom arose or to discourse upon natural history, of which he had rather strange notions. Egypt, with its animal worship, offered him a wonderful opportunity. He also recorded the superstitions believed by the various peoples he visited. Yet he occasionally exercised a little judgment, stating which of two or more accounts seemed to him the most plausible. He made no attempt, however, to determine the matter definitely.

Herodotus was primarily concerned with "the great and marvelous deeds done by Greeks and foreigners." Hence his style has movement and vigor. For this reason he has been called the father of narrative prose.

When Thucydides was a boy, he wept at hearing the history of Herodotus read. This interest in history resulted in his writing an account of *The Peloponnesian War*. As he was a prominent Athenian, Thucydides was made commander of seven ships during the war. He lost the battle at Amphibolus and was exiled for twenty years in accordance with the Athenian policy of so treating defeated generals or disgraced politicians.

In spite of his admiration for Herodotus, Thucydides did not follow the method of his predecessor. He strove to give accurate details and to obtain correct information concerning events in which he had not participated. He told

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no weird tales, scorned legends, and wrote in a reserved and dignified style. He also had little respect for divinations and consultations of oracles. If a man failed, his failure was due to his own lack of judgment rather than to fate. As Thucydides narrated what he had lived through, he occasionally referred to his personal experiences. Thus in his detailed description of the plague he says that he can set down its nature as he had the disease himself.

Thucydides presented the personages of his history by reporting their speeches as accurately as possible from memory. The funeral oration of Pericles is one of the gems in the history. The reader is impressed by the logical reasoning of the speeches and does not wonder that the audiences were swayed by them. The description of the plague reveals Thucydides at his best, for he writes simply but with great pathos. The terror of the Athenians, the agonies of the sufferers, the general hopelessness, and the lack of restraint are fully set forth. Unfortunately, Thucydides had little interest in the literature and art of the Golden Age in Greece. Hence his history is not a complete picture of his age.

The period of Greek history following the Peloponnesian War was the subject of Xenophon's works. Xenophon was a farmer and sportsman from northern Attica. Attracted to Athens, he became a pupil of Socrates, whose

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practical precepts he understood far better than the philosophical discussions. What he recalled of his master's teachings he set forth in his *Memorabilia*, *Apology*, and *Symposium*.

After the death of Socrates, Xenophon took part in the ill-fated expedition of the ten thousand to Persia. On the return march, one of much suffering and discouragement, he led the exhausted army. The *Anabasis* is an account of the expedition. Naturally, it exalts the position of the commander, who seems to have spent much time in making encouraging speeches to the troops. Another book inspired by this expedition into Persia was the *Cyropædia*, or *Education of Cyrus*. Xenophon wrote this book to show an ideal state of society under an ideal king as an example for future rulers. To prove his points he often included fictitious anecdotes about Cyrus.

On his return Xenophon continued his military service under the Spartans, who rewarded him with an estate in Elis, where he settled down to continue in the *Hellenica* the history of Thucydides. Besides his historical works, Xenophon wrote several treatises upon farming, hunting, and horsemanship. The *Æconomicus* gives instructions upon how to conduct a household and how to manage a wife. From personal observation Xenophon derived some valuable

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points. The treatise is recommended to harassed husbands.

Many students have learned Greek by means of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, as they have learned Latin from the works of Cæsar. The reason for using this work as a text-book is Xenophon's simple narrative style. At times it is almost amateurish, with its rhetorical questions and conversations. Yet by his clear descriptions Xenophon brings the scenes before the reader in rapid succession.

Polybius also played an important part in history. He was an active member of the Achæan League organized to resist the Romans. In 168 B. C. he was sent to Rome for trial. There he remained for fifteen years, during which he became so thoroughly imbued with Roman ideas that he returned to his native country an ardent advocate for Roman customs. In his histories he traced the course of Roman affairs from the Punic Wars to the conquest of Greece in 146 B. C. Polybius strove for accuracy and did not hesitate to criticize other writers. He also had a tendency to draw lessons from history. For this reason and because his style lacks vigor Polybius is not very generally read to-day.

Of the Latin historians Julius Cæsar has been the most widely read and the most hated because generations of youth have struggled through the campaigns of the Gallic War. The general view

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of Cæsar fails to take into account his ability as an administrator. As Governor of Gaul and dictator at Rome he ruled wisely and efficiently, ever keeping in mind the welfare of the people. His *Commentaries* give numerous evidences of this ability, for he notes carefully the customs of the tribes, the geography of the country, and the possibilities of making the conquered country profitable to the Romans. The *Commentaries* were often written during the campaigns, which are explained in detail. The dominating power of the commander is indicated by such a phrase as "Cæsar had to do everything at one moment." He desires to justify his actions both in Gaul and in Italy during the civil war. In a simple, concise style he explains so clearly his plans that the reader has no difficulty in following the movements of the army or the purpose of the commander.

During the civil war Cæsar was supported by Sallust, who had been expelled from the senate upon charges of dissolute living. Cæsar restored him to his position and sent him to Africa on a campaign against Jugurtha, King of Numidia. Sallust acquired such a large fortune while he was governor of Numidia that he was able to retire to his celebrated gardens after Cæsar's death. Here he wrote *The Conspiracy of Catiline* and *The Jugurthine War*. Sallust followed the method of Thucydides in that he placed consid-

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erable emphasis upon the discussion of the society of his time. To him Cæsar was what Pericles had been to Thucydides. Naturally he exalted Cæsar, defending the latter's actions, and seizing any opportunity to prove the aristocratic party inefficient. At times the reader becomes wearied with his philosophical interpretations and moralizings, as well as with his mannerisms of style; but his striking characterizations, his terseness, and the sincerity of his efforts overbalance his faults.

The only professional historian of Latin literature was Livy, who at the age of thirty-two determined to glorify Rome by recording her *History from the Foundation of the City*. Since he published the parts of his work as he completed them, he gained a reputation in his own day. Only about one-fourth of this monumental work is extant, but from that portion we can easily see that Livy's purpose was to give his generation examples of noble and courageous living. He pointed to the past as the period of Rome's greatness.

Livy's history is a storehouse of legends, traditions, and conflicting accounts of historical events. He depended upon hearsay without taking the trouble to consult even the most available sources. Frequently he remarked about two radically different versions, "It does not greatly matter which is right." He concerned himself



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little with the accuracy of details, for he was primarily interested in exalting the character of the ancient Roman. He confuses the reader in his descriptions of military operations; he repeats what he has previously told in another connection; he spends no effort in tracing causes or reflecting on circumstances; he is often dull and verbose.

Yet no book in the Latin language, with the exception of Virgil's *Æneid*, conveys to us so well the grandeur of Rome. Livy's ability to depict the emotions of his characters and the dramatic intensity of such scenes as the attack on Rome by the Gauls make the Romans live before us. We are stirred when we read about their courageous deeds and are aroused by their forceful speeches. In fact, Livy's *History* might be called an oratorical history, for the small portion we have contains over 400 speeches.

The history of the first century of the Empire is the subject of the *Histories* and *Annals* by Tacitus. These books reveal the horrors of the imperial rule and the dissoluteness of social life. Tacitus exalted the virtues, warning the care-free Romans against their disregard of the sterner qualities. His work is somewhat biased because he concentrates upon the vices of the capital of the Empire and fails to point out the efficiency of the governments in the provinces.

This oversight was remedied to some extent

in the *Agricola*, an account of the province of Britain, and the *Germania*, a description of the customs of the Germans. Even in these works Tacitus pointed out how much more courageous and stalwart the Britons and Germans were than the Romans. As Tacitus had been a governor in Gaul, the *Germania* was based largely upon his own observations. He obtained the material for the *Agricola* from his father-in-law, who had subdued and organized the province of Britain. The book is a tribute to the energy and ability of this man.

Since he is a social historian, Tacitus is the most interesting of Roman historians. He wrote in a concise, epigrammatic style enlivened with many clever sayings. Furthermore, he had the ability to characterize a man by a single sentence. Thus of Tiberius he wrote: "Dissembling to the last, he hoped by false appearance to hide the decay of nature." He frequently lashed the vices of his times with harsh satire. He described Rome as "the common sink into which everything infamous and abominable flows like a torrent from all quarters of the world."

The Chronicles of the Middle Ages are for the most part mere lists of events, often with only the briefest comments. Several years were frequently passed over without entries, because only the outstanding events were considered sufficiently important to be noted. Sometimes

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the chronicler was a monk with some literary ability. Then the descriptions would be more complete and more interesting. Such a book is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

King Alfred probably wrote the best section, an account of his own reign. One of the works which King Alfred had translated into English to enlighten his people was Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, compiled from various sources by the venerable monk of Whitby in the eighth century. Much of the historical material is as accurate as the researches by Bede could make it, but he added numerous stories of the remarkable miracles of English and Irish missionaries. Bede believed these and included them, for they taught kindness and consideration.

After the year 1000, however, the monks wrote more complete records, filling in their stories with legendary material where a knowledge of exact occurrences was lacking. The most important of these for the English reader is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of Britain*, composed in the twelfth century in Latin. Geoffrey mingled fact and fiction so thoroughly that some critics have considered him a romancer rather than a historian. His stories concerning the settlement of Britain by the Trojan descendants of Æneas, the trials of such kings as Lear and Cymbeline, and the marvelous deeds of King Arthur's

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knights have been rich sources for some of the noblest works in literature. The Arthurian romances and Shakespeare were indebted to this most popular history.

In the fourteenth century, Iceland was conquered by the Norse. Among those brought to the court of Norway was Sturla, the historian of the conquest. In the *Sturlunga Saga* he honored the heroes on both sides with notable impartiality and expressed the reticent and hardy spirit of his people. This book, together with Sturla's record of the reign of King Hacon of Norway, is a masterpiece of Icelandic prose.

The historian of the age of chivalry was Jean Froissart, who from his boyhood had been an enthusiast for the deeds of knighthood in battle, in the tournaments, or at the courts of love. Like Herodotus, Froissart traveled from place to place seeking information from those he met. He was a good listener and never wearied of gathering material for his history. As one of the secretaries to Queen Philippa of England, he could enjoy to his heart's content the pleasure of watching the valiant feats of arms in the gay tournaments and the bliss of writing love poetry to the beautiful ladies of the court. Furthermore, he remembered all he had heard, so that every bit of stray information which came to his ears found a place in his *Chronicles*.

The *Chronicles* contain a series of detailed

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pictures of one side of life in the fourteenth century. They deal almost exclusively with the doings of knights and princes during the Hundred Years' War. Whether the courageous actions were performed by Frenchmen or Englishmen, Froissart recorded them with equal admiration. But he ignored entirely the hardships and sufferings of the lower classes, for their commonplace lives did not interest him. We hear little about the social and economic conditions which brought the uprisings of the peasants and wrought important changes in history. The book is like a gorgeous tapestry portraying the romance and adventure of a feudal age.

Philippe de Commines, the historian of the fifteenth century, held positions of trust in the courts of Charles the Bold of Burgundy and Louis XI and Louis XII of France. He carefully considered the factors and influences which were transforming Medievalism, and he looked forward to the Renaissance. He was essentially a shrewd diplomat, and his *Chronicles* of the reigns of Louis XI and Charles VIII are written from that point of view. He realized that feudalism was passing into nationalism. Hence he left the court of Burgundy for that of France. His style is somewhat rambling, owing to his tendency to generalize and to digress from the subject. Yet he is thoroughly representative of the spirit of his age. His works were a source

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of inspiration to Sir Walter Scott for *Quentin Durward*.

The historians who wrote during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demand little attention from the student of literature, for their works were generally dull records of explorations or of newly established colonies. They contain valuable information, but their style is diffuse and stilted. Often these writers exaggerated for the purpose of spreading their propaganda. Thus Sir Walter Raleigh's *Discoverie of Guiana* contains his schemes of colonization, while his *History of the World* from the Creation to the end of the Macedonian Empire is largely based on inaccurate predecessors. Our Puritan forefathers delighted in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, a harrowing account of religious persecutions from the early days to his own time. Of all the histories written in the Elizabethan Period, Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* is the most entertaining for the modern reader. Hakluyt obtained his material for the most part from the stories told by the explorers and was able to bring to his work the adventurous spirit of these hardy sailors. John Smith's account of the colony of Virginia and William Bradford's and John Winthrop's histories of the New England colonies record the

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hardships suffered by the settlers of the American continent in a plain, unadorned style.

The eighteenth century was the age of the philosophical historian, whose creed was stated by Lord Bolingbroke: "History is philosophy teaching by examples." David Hume, William Robertson, and Edward Gibbon were all widely read in their own day, but Gibbon's subject, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and the power of his presentation have placed his work among the great histories of all times. While Gibbon was studying at Oxford, where he was disgusted with the methods of teaching, he became a Catholic. His father at once sent him to Lausanne to live in the home of a Calvinist pastor. Here he was nominally reconverted to Protestantism but actually remained throughout his life a philosophic skeptic. He again disturbed his father by falling in love with Suzanne Curchod, who later married the famous Necker. Threatened with disinheritance, he wrote, "I sighed as a lover, but obeyed as a son." On a visit to Rome in 1764 Gibbon decided to write the *Decline and Fall*. For twenty years he devoted himself to this work.

Gibbon admired greatly Tacitus, whom he took for a model. He believed history should "record the transactions of the past for the instruction of future ages." By expounding the causes and results of various incidents, history

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teaches eternal truths. No period in the history of the world was so suitable for such a purpose as the last days of the Roman Empire. In an ordered, balanced, and highly Latinized style Gibbon presented to his readers a long series of magnificent panoramas from the reign of Trajan to the fall of Constantinople. Under his elaborate style there is often a touch of subtle irony as in such a sneer as "I have described the triumph of barbarism and religion." His indictment of Christianity in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters caused an enormous amount of controversy until it was discovered that he had stressed the secondary causes and passed superficially over the main fact, the life and death of Christ. Gibbon justly deserves his fame because of his insight into the reasons for the decay of Rome and because of his gorgeous style.

The philosophical historians were succeeded by the scientific historians, who attempted by thorough research to interpret accurately their chosen periods. In England there were Carlyle, Macaulay, Green, Stubbs, Milman, Grote, Bryce; in France, Guizot, Thiers, Michelet, Tocqueville; in Germany, Niebuhr, Mommsen, Ranke, Treitschke; in Russia, Karamsin; in America, Bancroft, Prescott, Parkman, Motley, Fiske. Only a few have gained a place in literature through the quality of their style; yet the general reader



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will find that all of them wrote in an entertaining manner.

After five years of study at Edinburgh, Thomas Carlyle returned to his farm in Craigenputtock with his wife, the sparkling Jane Welsh. To earn a living he did hack writing, mostly translations from the German. He introduced German philosophy to England by these translations and by the lectures which he later gave in London. His theory of history is set forth in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, a course of lectures on great men representing the hero as divinity, prophet, poet, priest, man of letters, and king. Carlyle was antagonistic to democracy, for he believed in government by the best men. He taught, however, that these men should govern not for their own benefit but for the advancement of the masses. He was indignant at the poverty and inequality in the world. He stated that if the ruling classes neglect the divine laws of consideration for their fellow men, they will inevitably suffer the penalty.

This idea was the keynote of *The French Revolution*. Before reading Carlyle's book a person should acquaint himself with the main events of the period, for Carlyle brilliantly pictures striking episodes rather than a connected history. In a vigorous, rushing style, characterized by unusual words, striking phrases, and unique punc-

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tuation, he recreates the confusion and uncertainty of a period of mobs, guillotinations, and sudden changes.

Another Scotchman, Thomas Babington Macaulay, was the direct antithesis of Carlyle, both in ideas and in style. Macaulay's memory was the wonder of his time; he read everything and apparently forgot nothing. It is said that he could repeat verbatim a large part of the Bible, besides many other works. His historical writing was his avocation, for he was an admired member of Parliament and a lawyer of distinction. His political bias as a Whig colored much that he wrote, and he overemphasized his own opinions. He was the master of paragraph development and of a lucid style, which was somewhat metallic. The results of Macaulay's indefatigable labor were his essays in the *Edinburgh Review*, starting with the *Essay on Milton* (1825), and his *History of England*. He finished only five volumes of the latter, covering the period from 1685 to 1700. The history is extremely detailed, with many illustrations to enforce his points. Often the significance of events is lost in this mass of details. Macaulay, nevertheless, has made his readers acquainted with the spirit dominant in the last years of the seventeenth century.

Many readers have gained much pleasure from John Richard Green's *Short History of the Eng-*

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lish People, because he traces the rise of the middle class in a fascinating style. For a study of British government, William Stubbs's *The Constitutional History of England* is an authoritative work.

Henry Hart Milman devoted his studies to a *History of the Jews*, a *History of Christianity under the Empire*, and *History of Latin Christianity to the Pontificate of Nicholas V.* His works are somewhat controversial but are generally accepted as important interpretations. George Grote's *History of Greece* may also be ranked with these as a contribution of permanent value to historical writing.

In 1862 James Bryce published his *Holy Roman Empire*, which was followed twenty-six years later by *The American Commonwealth*. In the latter book he examined thoroughly the political, economic, and social institutions of the United States. His remarkable understanding of the American character fitted him for his position as Ambassador to Washington from 1907 to 1913.

The French historian, François Pierre Guizot used his position of professor of history at the Sorbonne to advance his political ambitions. His numerous historical works were popular discussions rather than scientific expositions. Guizot's rival, Louis Adolphe Thiers, is noted for his histories of the French Revolu-

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tion and the Empire, in which he sustained the Napoleonic legend.

Jules Michelet, on the other hand, considered history a science. With the temperament of a philosopher, he made generalizations from his study of causes and emphasized the importance of small incidents. His *History of France* dwells upon personal aptitudes and social movements, for Michelet had a passion for humanity. Saintsbury has called him "the most original and remarkable historian in point of style that France has ever produced."

Alexis de Tocqueville came to America to study our prisons but extended his study to include all American institutions. He became so enthusiastic that he held up America as the ideal democracy in his *Democracy in America*. He used the experience of America as an object lesson for Europe and particularly for France.

The German school of historians may be characterized by their devotion to the study of origins as a historical method. Berthold Georg Niebuhr, the leader of this school, wrote a *Roman History*. He scorned all non-scientific historians and made some extremely caustic remarks about Livy's method. He was followed by Theodor Mommsen, who also took Rome as his subject for investigation; Leopold von Ranke, who devoted his attention to the history of Southern Europe and Germany in the sixteenth and seventeenth cen-

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turies; Heinrich von Treitschke, the leader of the Prussian school, whose *German History in the Nineteenth Century* inspired an intense spirit of nationalism by exalting the power of the state.

The Russian historian, Nicolai Michaelovich Karamsin, so influenced his period, 1790-1820, that it is sometimes called after him. A student of the English Sterne and Richardson and the French Rousseau, Karamsin was a sentimentalist. His *History of the Russian State* in ten volumes became at once a classic, for it opened the eyes of the Russians to the great deeds of their forefathers by appealing to their feelings. A German critic designates Karamsin as "the first Russian man of letters of genuine cultural influence on the entire reading world." This eulogy is probably more appropriate to his *Letters of a Russian Traveler*, giving his impressions of Germany, Switzerland, Paris, and London, than to his history.

The nineteenth century was the period of great territorial and industrial expansion in the United States. As the nation gained in power and the American continents became the goal of European immigrants, the historians traced this development from its beginnings. William H. Prescott devoted his attention to the romantic conquests by the early Spaniards. *The History of Ferdinand and Isabella, The Conquest of*

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*Mexico*, and *The Conquest of Peru* relate the stirring events of Spanish adventure. Altho Prescott may have been inaccurate in minor details, he has told his story in a dramatic style.

The period of the French and Indian War is the subject of Francis Parkman's histories. In preparation for this task Parkman lived among the Indians and learned their customs and habits. These experiences he recorded in *The California and Oregon Trail*. In eight volumes, beginning with *The Conspiracy of Pontiac* and ending with *A Half-Century of Conflict*, he chronicled the struggle between France and England for the possession of North America. Parkman investigated original documents and has left us an accurate and vigorous account of this conflict.

The Revolution and its heroes have received most discerning treatment in John Fiske's *The War of Independence*. George Bancroft also dealt with this period and the formation of the Constitution in his *History of the United States*, as well as with the early periods of discovery and settlement. But as literary works these histories cannot compare with those of Prescott and Parkman.

There is, however, another American historian who deserves mention, altho he did not write the history of his own country. John Lothrop Motley became so interested in the courage of

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the Dutch Protestants in withstanding the tyranny of Philip II of Spain that he determined to write their history. *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* and *The History of the United Netherlands* are somewhat biased in their point of view, because Motley was carried away by his sympathy for the Dutch; but their dramatic quality makes them excellent reading.

The most popular history written in the twentieth century has been H. G. Wells's *An Outline of History*. From the geological ages to the Treaty of Versailles, Wells reviews the advance of civilization, stressing those events which have greatly influenced man's position on the earth and minimizing the local and temporary incidents. In spite of the array of authorities cited in footnotes, Wells gives an individual interpretation of events. Particularly delightful are his speculations and his subtle thrusts at established reputations. His heroes are the common men rather than the leaders, whom he delights in humbling.

Every period in the world's history has been carefully investigated by the professional historians with the view of determining what actually occurred and of interpreting the influence of various movements upon the development of civilization. Some are optimistic, prophesying a better understanding among the peoples of the earth, while others sound a warn-

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ing, basing their deductions upon the animosities revealed by the recent World War. All of them, however, are making a laudable attempt to evaluate the endeavors of mankind to create for himself a satisfactory state of society.



## VI

### THE PHILOSOPHERS

THE works of a few philosophers deserve to be included in a history of literature, not so much because of the system of philosophy which they expound as because of the style in which they are written. Some philosophers were masters of lucid exposition; others had the gift of facile expression; while a few possessed the poetic temperament. These thinkers have illustrated their theories with allegories or proved their contentions with appropriate stories. They have enriched literature with descriptions of social conditions and have portrayed famous characters.

The greatest teacher among the Greeks never wrote a book. Socrates preferred questioning his pupils concerning the problems of existence in an attempt to lead them to discover the truth or fallacy of their beliefs. He seldom stated his own opinions definitely, for he wished to stimulate thinking on the part of the young men who listened to him. This method aroused the teachers of the older schools of philosophy so that they accused him of destroying the belief in the gods and of corrupting the youth. They were powerful enough to have him tried and

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condemned to drink the hemlock. Plato, his most noted follower, wrote a dramatic account of the attitude of Socrates at the trial. The *Apology* is, however, more than a description of the trial; it is a discussion concerning the true nature of wisdom.

After the death of Socrates, Plato traveled in Egypt, Italy, and Sicily. On his return to Athens he opened the School of the Academy, where he lectured on the theories of his teacher and developed his own theory concerning the reality of ideas. Altho Plato formulated no definite system of philosophy, his teachings in regard to the pursuit of the good and the beautiful have become the keynote of the school named after him. Professor Jowett, an English Platonist of the Victorian Age, wrote: "The germs of most ideas, even most Christian ones, are to be found in Plato."

Plato's purpose was to improve man by teaching an ethical way of life based upon the acquirement of knowledge, for "happiness results from the pursuit of virtue." Plato believed that man naturally desired the good, but through ignorance often followed the evil, because he did not know how to determine the nature of the good. In his dialogs, the most important of which are *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, *Meno*, *Gorgias*, *Symposium*, *Phædo*, *Laws*, and *Republic*, he explained such qualities as courage, duty, friendship, love,

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and patience. In the *Phædo* are Plato's arguments for immortality, the subject which Socrates discussed just before he drank the hemlock. One of the finest passages in all literature is that describing the death of Socrates, with which this dialog concludes. In his attitude toward death Socrates showed his nobility of soul. The *Republic* gives Plato's notion of an ideal state—the first of a long line of Utopias. In this state the philosophers will rule justly and see that every citizen does that for which he is naturally fitted. Plato works out a complete system of education and government, so that individual freedom will be preserved. He excludes poets from his state, because they tell fictitious stories. Yet in this very dialog he increased the effectiveness of his exposition by analogies, for he was essentially a poet.

Plato's masterly handling of the difficult dialog method, his poetic diction, and the even flow of his narrative have established his place in literature.

For twenty years Aristotle, often called the Stagirite from his native city, Stagira, a Greek colony in Macedonia, listened to Plato's lectures. In type of mind the pupil was almost directly opposed to the teacher, for he had had a scientific training from his father, the court physician to the grandfather of Alexander. After Plato's death, Aristotle became tutor to the young and

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headstrong Alexander, who later had specimens of plant and animal life collected from Asia for him and supplied him with funds to conduct his researches. Aristotle took all knowledge for his province and so thoroughly investigated every subject that he was to the Middle Ages the "master of those who know."

In 335 B. C. he opened his school in the Lyceum at Athens, where he lectured for twelve years on scientific, philosophical, and esthetic subjects. Only two of his works concern the student of literature. These are the *Ethics*, in which he taught that man must live a life controlled by reason to gain his desired goal of happiness; and the *Poetics*, in which he analyzed the Homeric poems and *Œdipus Rex* by Sophocles to determine the qualities of great art. He taught that the artist should imitate nature, not by giving a photographic reproduction of the subject, but by expressing the universal significance underlying it. Noble characters, deep emotions, and great actions are the materials for a great art. In the *Poetics* he laid down three important rules for the writer. The first was that the work must have unity of impression. Each event should follow naturally the preceding event and point to the conclusion. The second discussed the matter of probability of events. Plausible impossibilities, he stated, were to be preferred to improbable possibilities. Finally he enunciated

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the doctrine of catharsis as applied to the drama. The drama arouses our emotions, but, by the progress of the action before us on the stage, gives us pleasurable relief. Thus through literature we have an outlet for suppressed emotions which cannot be satisfied in our daily life.

For two thousand years Aristotle's treatises were the chief text-books for the world's thinkers. Two Arabian scholars, Averroes and Avicenna, wrote voluminous commentaries upon them, and through these commentaries the master was known to the Middle Ages. To the schoolmen of the period just preceding the Renaissance, Aristotle's works were the Bible of Philosophy. According to James H. Robinson's *Mind in the Making*, we are to-day still under their influence in the study of esthetics.

Two books of practical philosophy written in Greek deserve mention because the modern reader will find many valuable suggestions in them. One contains the discourses of a Roman slave; the other the meditations of a Roman emperor. Both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius were adherents of the Stoic Philosophy, which taught duty, resignation, and self-control. Epictetus had gained his freedom some time before the year 90, for he left Rome when Domitian exiled the philosophers. At Nicropolis in Epirus he lectured on progress, contentment, tranquillity, friendship, exercise, finery in dress, and, in fact,

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any subject suggested by his experiences or his observation. These lectures were taken down by his pupil Arrian and published after his death. Marcus Aurelius, worn out by the trials of the Empire, wrote the *Meditations*, which he entitled *To Himself*, to encourage and to guide him in his difficulties. He jotted down his thoughts, often in the form of commands. Gibbon characterized him as "severe to himself, indulgent to the imperfections of others, just and beneficent to all mankind."

The Romans took their philosophy from the Greeks, for they were doers rather than thinkers. After the conquest of Greece in 146 B. C., many Greek scholars gave lectures at Rome on the various systems of philosophy. When the Roman authors wrote philosophical treatises, they usually reproduced in a popular form Greek thought. Thus Cicero based his *Republic* and *Laws* upon Plato's works of the same titles. Cicero's treatment is somewhat more political, as he was a practical politician. He chose the Roman Republic in its most flourishing period as his example of the ideal state. His dialogs *On Old Age* and *On Friendship* are his most notable productions in this field. In the first, Cato answers the charges brought against old age by two of his friends with a discourse on its advantages, proving that while old age may remove us from active affairs, it compensates by

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giving us wisdom and authority. In a diffuse essay Lælius explains to his two sons-in-law that true friendship depends upon mutual affection and benefits to be gained. Your friend is your other self. A third treatise, *On Offices*, is a didactic exposition of the honorable and expedient. In these books Cicero wished to show his readers how to accommodate themselves to their environments and how to accept what fortune might bring to them.

The ethical philosopher of Latin literature is Seneca. Born in Córdoba, Spain, he was brought to Rome as a boy to study oratory, philosophy, and law. After varied fortunes, including an eight years' exile in Corsica on the charge of joining in a political intrigue with the niece of the Emperor Claudius, he was appointed tutor to Nero. During the early years of his pupil's reign he held important positions and amassed a fortune. At sixty-two he retired, and three years later committed suicide at the command of the Emperor. His *Epistles to Lucilius* is a course in morality, touching every phase of life. In a concise and epigrammatic style he points out how men ought to live.

Just before the Dark Ages began, the last of the Roman philosophers was imprisoned by Theodoric, the Ostrogoth, on a charge of conspiracy. While he was in prison awaiting execution, Boethius wrote in poetry and prose the

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*Consolation of Philosophy.* Philosophy appeared to him as a grave and noble lady to comfort him and admonish him. Boethius had been a devoted student of both Plato and Aristotle; so Philosophy drew her teachings from them. This book exerted an enormous influence on the Middle Ages and was one of the first books to be printed. It was translated into English by King Alfred, Chaucer, and Queen Elizabeth.

The dull and massive volumes compiled by the medieval schoolmen and the humanists of the Renaissance are read only by specialists. Two sixteenth-century Italian handbooks for the politician have, however, retained their popularity. Niccolò Machiavelli dedicated *The Prince* to Lorenzo the Magnificent of Florence in the hope of regaining the political prominence he had lost when the Medicis returned to Florence in 1512. During the days of the Florentine Republic he had served on various diplomatic missions to Rome, France, and Germany. At the court of Cæsar Borgia he had noted how government by force and dissimulation insured power to the ruler. Hence he advocated that method in *The Prince*. Machiavelli's political theories were determined by the conditions of his day, for he was writing a practical guide, not an ethical treatise. Yet his underlying purpose was an admirable one. He desired to have an independent and unified Italy, freed from



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foreign domination, and he believed the Medicis the logical rulers to carry out this unification. His name, however, has acquired the connotation of unscrupulousness when applied to modern politicians.

Baldassaro Castiglione was as eminently fitted to write a handbook for the courtier as Machiavelli for the politician, since he had spent most of his life at courts of popes and princes. In a witty dialog, *The Courtier*, he stated the requisites of a perfect gentleman. Many well-known contemporaries take part in the discussions. *The Courtier* was a source for the characteristics of chivalry as portrayed by Rabelais, Cervantes, Spencer, and Sidney.

At the same time in England, Sir Thomas More described an ideal social and political state in his *Utopia*. Like Machiavelli, More had experienced both the favor and disappointments of political fortune. Even more rapid than his rise to the Lord Chancellorship was his fall when he opposed the divorce of Henry VIII, who committed him to the Tower and finally had him beheaded. It is said that Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* gave him some comfort during his imprisonment. More's *Utopia* purported to be the account of a state visited by a shipwrecked sailor, who had accompanied Amerigo Vespucci on his voyages. The doctrines of More have gradually been adopted and have revolutionized

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European society. The *Utopia* was written in Latin, but was soon translated into the principal European languages.

In a brief outline of literature it is possible to consider only a very few of the philosophers who have lived in the last three hundred years. Indeed, it is difficult sometimes to determine whether they belong to literature, for their importance has been due far more to their thought than to their method of presentation. They have been great thinkers, but they have expressed themselves in technical language or in an obscure style. Some, however, have been such brilliant writers or have so influenced the progress of culture that they deserve our attention. A few, like Francis Bacon and Voltaire, have written other forms of literature and will be considered in the chapters dealing with those forms.

Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, and Leibnitz in the seventeenth century mark the beginnings of modern philosophy. The rationalism of René Descartes is summed up in his famous dictum, "I think, therefore I am." The *Discourse on Method* expounded the scientific principles of logic and order. The function of philosophy was to weld the experiences and beliefs of man into a harmonious unity. This view influenced the composition of the classical French drama and freed French prose from the elaborations of the older writers. Descartes's

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clarity of expression and precision made him a model for succeeding writers.

Benedict Spinoza, a Dutch philosopher of Jewish parentage, learned Latin and the philosophy of Descartes from an ex-Jesuit physician. In 1656 he was excommunicated from the synagogue because of his free thinking. While he ground lenses to earn a living, he pondered on the highest good. His *Ethics*, written in difficult Latin, furnished Lessing and Goethe in Germany and Coleridge and Wordsworth in England with material for discussion, and thus indirectly influenced literature.

The literary fame of Thomas Hobbes rests upon only one book, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil*. The theory upon which Hobbes's political philosophy is founded is that the state is supreme, demanding submission from the individual. He took a rather cynical view of humanity; in his opinion, man was always actuated by self-interest. His views of the state were the guiding principles adopted by the English Stuarts, who fully believed in the divine right of kings. Thus Hobbes was thoroughly in accord with the views of his age.

A student of the systems of Descartes and Hobbes was John Locke, who published, after nearly twenty years of labor, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. This study of

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the human mind opens with a criticism of the doctrine of innate ideas and proceeds to prove that ideas are obtained from experience. Locke devotes some discussion to language as it influences thought, as well as to the types and nature of our ideas.

The philosophical theories of Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, and Locke were criticized by the German philosopher, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz. His service to literature was that he aroused his compatriots to attain a national culture after the trying period of the Thirty Years' War. His insistence upon a revival of German thought and German letters prepared the way for the golden age of German literature.

Almost every author in the eighteenth century was a potential philosopher, for it was an age of speculation. Even the novelists delayed the progress of their stories to insert philosophical discussions. The philosophers of the preceding century were followed enthusiastically or opposed violently by fundamentalists, who feared the scientific method of rationalism.

The defender of religion against the conclusions of Locke was Bishop George Berkeley. His *Principles of Human Knowledge* is one of the most lucid philosophical treatises in the English language.

The organization of society in eighteenth-century France was analyzed and severely criticized

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by Montesquieu, Diderot, and Rousseau. Charles Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu made a study of the political institutions of his native country and her neighbors, including England, where he lived for two years.

His *Persian Letters* is a satire against the faults of European society as seen by an Oriental traveler. This more serious purpose is veiled under a light and clever tone, with many references to Oriental manners. Next Montesquieu turned to Roman history, and in *Considerations upon the Causes of the Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans* drew certain generalizations concerning society. The results of his observations of conditions in his own time and his studies of the past were collected in his greatest work, *The Spirit of the Laws*. After an analysis of various constitutions Montesquieu reduced government to three types—Republic, Monarchy, and Despotism. His description of an ideal government was consulted by both republicans and constitutionalists during the French Revolution and the reestablishment of the monarchy.

The most ambitious work of French philosophy was the *Encyclopédie*, a dictionary of the sciences, arts, and trades in thirty-five volumes under the editorship of Denis Diderot. During the twenty-two years he was supervising this work, Diderot wrote philosophical and critical essays on a great range of subjects and even ventured

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into the realms of drama and fiction. His philosophy was based on the theory that in Nature could be found the explanation of everything. Diderot was a fighter who expressed his opinions boldly in a lively style.

Another disciple of Nature, but of a much more sentimentalized Nature than Diderot's, was Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose works were the inspiration for the French Revolution and Romanticism. For him the ills of his time came from the restraints and inequalities of organized society. This belief is developed in a dissertation on *The Origin of the Inequality of Mankind*. He classified inequalities as natural and man-made. The natural inequalities are those of temperament and individual talent, while the man-made are those of social position. By tracing the development of society he illustrated his theory and pointed out that in modern life the rich were oppressing the poor. The *Social Contract* advocates a return to Nature, for man in a state of innocence is naturally good. In such a state man consents to be governed because the individual is made happy by the general welfare of the community. Rousseau applied his doctrine to family life in *The New Héloïse*, a sentimental novel written under the influence of Richardson, and to education in *Emile*. His theory of pedagogy was based upon a consideration of the nature of the child, who should be given

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an opportunity to express his individuality without restraint. In many points this theory reminds us of the various modern experiments in education.

Rousseau's influence upon the early nineteenth century was widespread, from Jefferson in America to Kant in Germany. The writers of the romantic period in European literature also found the essential ideas of their devotion to nature and common man in Rousseau's works.

The majority of nineteenth-century philosophers are too technical for our consideration. A few, like Schopenhauer, wrote excellent prose, but only one composed a literary masterpiece. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche wrote the most beautiful and lucid prose in German literature. Like Plato, he had the poetic temperament and enforced his ideas with symbolic analogies. Brought up under the care of pious but fussy women, he was shy and solitary. At eighteen he lost his religious faith and began his search for a new god. This was to be the superman, so eloquently proclaimed in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. After years of loneliness and ill-health Nietzsche became insane in 1888 and finally died in 1900.

Nietzsche taught the will to power, for only by this will could the superman be evolved. He hated democracy and scorned the masses. "Man

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is something that is to be surpassed." This is the refrain of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. The guide-books for the superman are *Beyond Good and Evil* and the *Genealogy of Morals*, collections of brilliantly phrased aphorisms. The superman is a man of strength and courage, who has passed beyond the usual ideas concerning good and evil. To Nietzsche was given the power of words and the persuasive eloquence of suggestion. His teaching was the inspiration for the individualism in modern European literature.

Recently Will Durant has attempted to popularize philosophy by his *Story of Philosophy* and *Mansions of Philosophy*. These books have received some criticism from the modern scholars because of their popular treatment. But for the general reader they are an adequate introduction to a somewhat difficult subject.



## THE APHORISTIC ESSAY

AN essay is a prose composition of moderate length dealing with a subject in such a way as to give some indication of the author's personality. The author aims to instruct the reader or to convey his ideas with the hope of changing conditions, or he may merely desire to amuse by recollecting experiences. He treats his subject from a particular point of view and makes no attempt to discuss it completely. The appeal of the essay is primarily an intellectual one, for the essayist gives us his opinions or reflections.

An aphoristic essay is one largely composed of epigrams and maxims. In a single sentence is packed enough material for a paragraph. The concentrated style of the aphoristic essay makes it somewhat hard to read, but the effort demanded is amply repaid by the suggestive value of the thoughts.

The term essay, originally meaning a trial or endeavor, was first applied to a prose composition by Michel Eyquem, Sieur de Montaigne. In 1580 he published two volumes with this title. Montaigne's father had given him a classical education and had secured for him a position in the law courts. But as the son disliked to

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exert himself, he retired at the age of thirty-eight to his estate, "weary of enduring the servitude of the law courts, and with all his faculties still alert, yielded himself to the care of the learned maidens, with them to pass, in peace and quietness, whatsoever span of life might be further allotted to him." He spent his time reading in his tower-library and meditating on how to live and how to die. The management of the estate he left to his wife. Yet Montaigne was no solitary. He enjoyed good company, especially at table, and kept open house for any travelers who might pass his way. His love of eating and his hatred of exercise soon brought the usual results, so that Montaigne was forced to travel through Italy, Switzerland, and Germany seeking health.

Montaigne's *Essays* were written to answer the question, "What do I know?" He set down in an informal style thoughts suggested by his reading or observations. He talks to us about his personal affairs, revealing frankly his enthusiasms and prejudices. Any subject may appear in his rambling discussions, from "How One Ought to Govern His Will" to "Of Thumbs." By quotations from the classics he enforces his arguments. Montaigne's three volumes of essays form a library of information to be read at leisure before the fireplace on a cold winter night, for he refuses to hurry.

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The first of the English essayists was Francis Bacon, the philosopher and statesman. Bacon occupied various official positions, until he became Lord Chancellor and Viscount St. Albans in the reign of James I. In May, 1621, he was convicted on twenty-three charges of corruption and forced to retire. His political fortunes do not concern us except in so far as they gave him material for his books.

Bacon considered his essays of minor importance, for he spoke of them as "dispersed meditations." He expected that his fame would rest upon a great philosophical work, the *Instauratio Magna Scientiarum*, of which he completed only two parts, the *Advancement of Learning* and the *Novum Organum*. He opposed the accepted methods of teaching philosophy and advocated the experimental method. Important as his service to modern English philosophy has been, for every one person who has heard of his *Advancement of Learning*, a hundred are acquainted with the *Essays*.

The *Essays* fall into three groups: those on philosophical subjects, those dealing with politics, and those discussing domestic affairs. Following the legal method of weighing the pros and cons, Bacon analyzed his subjects and drew his conclusions. In a concise and epigrammatic style, characterized by the short sentence and the striking phrase, he brought out the signifi-

## THE APHORISTIC ESSAY

cance of an idea. He was fond of using Latin quotations and somewhat fanciful figures of speech to illustrate his points. The *Essays* are recommended for their excellent advice given in a terse manner.

The Elizabethan dramatist, Ben Jonson, also jotted down his thoughts on various subjects. These notes in the *Discoveries* are moral and critical in nature. Jonson lacked originality of thought, but in compactness of style he was a rival of Bacon.

In seventeenth-century France, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld's *Maxims* and Blaise Pascal's *Thoughts* brought to a close the period of the aphoristic essay. Disappointed in his attempt to gain success as a soldier, politician, and lover, Rochefoucauld concluded that motives of self-interest actuated the conduct of all mankind. This view he expressed in over 500 witty *Maxims* ranging from a sentence to half a page in length. Two of the most characteristic are: "Men would not live long in society were they not the dupes of each other." "There may be good, but there are no pleasant, marriages."

Pascal lived a life of retirement, for he was a student by nature. His chief interest was mathematics. He invented the barometer and conceived the idea of the omnibus. French and English critics have united in praising the *Provincial Letters*, in which he attacked the Jesuits

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with the weapon of polite irony. The *Thoughts*, taken from his note-books, were published by his friends after his death. One of his sentences is most suggestive for twentieth-century America. "It is dangerous to tell the people the laws are not just; for their obedience depends on the contrary belief."

After the seventeenth century the aphoristic essay as a distinct class was supplanted by other forms. Aphorisms, however, have adorned the style of many a later essayist by their pointed wisdom.

## VIII

### THE CHARACTER ESSAY AND THE PERIODICAL ESSAY

THE character essay is a description of a type, such as the idler, the student, the flatterer, the shopkeeper, the milkmaid, by the enumeration of the characteristics of that type. The originator of this form of essay was Theophrastus, the successor of Aristotle at the Lyceum. From his observation of the faults of Athenian society he produced the *Moral Characters*, containing thirty sketches, each devoted to some weakness or instance of bad manners. Theophrastus first defined the fault and then described the actions of a person controlled by it.

In the seventeenth century the *Moral Characters* became very popular in England and France. The chief imitations of them are John Earle's *Microcosmography*, Thomas Overbury's *Characters of Witty Descriptions*, and Jean de La Bruyère's *Les Caractères*. These brief sketches are extremely witty, and altho they deal with the social foibles of their time, they seem very modern because their authors were students of human nature.

The periodical essay is the name used to designate the English essays which appeared origi-

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nally in the eighteenth-century periodicals. On February 17, 1704, Daniel Defoe brought out the first number of his *Review*, a political journal of the Whig party. This paper, published at first weekly and later tri-weekly, contained a short essay on a serious topic, usually political but sometimes commercial. Defoe warned his readers of the greatness of France and advised England to build up her commerce. He was well qualified by experience to discuss these subjects, because he had been a wholesale dealer in hosiery, a commission merchant for wines from Spain and Portugal, an accountant, and a manufacturer of brick and tiles before he had been imprisoned in 1703 for his political pamphlet, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*. He said, "Thirteen times I have been rich and poor."

Another portion of the *Review* was devoted to "Advice from the Scandalous Club," described as "A Weekly History of Nonsense, Impertinence, Vice, and Debauchery." Later this section became known as *The Little Review*. These essays and others which Defoe contributed to various journals are at times mildly satirical in tone. As Defoe was a voluminous and hasty writer, his essays are often of small literary value and discuss insignificant and ephemeral subjects.

Undoubtedly the *Review* gave some hints to

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Steele, who established the famous *Tatler* in 1709. In this year he felt keenly the necessity of increasing a never adequate income. Probably the success of the *Review* and his experience as editor of the official *London Gazette* suggested to him the possibility of appealing to the general public in a periodical devoted to any subject of current interest. For nearly two years Steele discussed frankly and cleverly the political and social questions of the day. He even made an appeal to a new class of readers by giving some attention to affairs of "the fair sex, in honour of whom," he wrote in his prospectus, "I have invented the title of this paper." Steele's purpose was to reform and educate his readers by instructing them what to think. It has been said he was suited for such a task because he had participated in so many follies. Yet many of his faults were due to his generosity and affability, which he inherited from his Irish mother. Macaulay and Thackeray were too severe in their condemnation of Steele. According to John Gay's *Present State of Wit*, Steele's writings corrected "many thousand follies" and convinced "young fellows of the value and advantages of learning."

To make his comments more effective Steele created the character of Isaac Bickerstaff, the forerunner of Sir Roger de Coverley. Addison soon recognized the identity of Bickerstaff and



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offered his services to Steele. Two months after the last *Tatler* appeared, Addison and Steele started the *Spectator*, to be issued six times a week. The aim of this paper was "to establish a rational standard of conduct in morals, manners, art, and literature." A new middle class of the honest, successful merchants was beginning to attain prominence in the early years of the eighteenth century. They had not had the advantages of noble birth or education, but they were hard-working and earnest. The younger sons of the nobility, on the other hand, were too proud to work and hence had plenty of time for dissipation. The *Spectator* desired to educate one class and to reform the other.

The method employed was to scatter among critical and informative essays allegories to teach the needed lessons. But far more entertaining are the papers dealing with the experiences of the *Spectator* Club. Besides the quiet student of life from whom the Club took its name, the group consisted of representatives of the principal classes of society—the lawyer, the clergyman, Captain Sentry, Sir Andrew Freeport, William Honeycomb, and the genial country gentleman, Sir Roger de Coverley. The character-drawing of these types makes the *Spectator* an important predecessor of the novel.

From the precise and restrained but easy style of the *Spectator* many later writers, including

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Stevenson, learned their art. Dr. Johnson's advice was that "whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

It is to be regretted that Johnson did not follow his own advice, when he wrote his papers in the *Rambler* and *Idler*, the two periodicals appearing on Tuesdays and Saturdays during 1750-1752 and 1758-1760. His essays are weighty discussions upon abstract subjects. Johnson's style lacked the lightness of touch which makes the *Spectator* papers such delightful reading. Addison and Steele pointed out social faults with a rapier, while Johnson drove home his moralistic teachings with a club. Even his attempts at humor were heavy-footed. Still, the *Rambler* and *Idler* contain some sound criticism and some excellent advice dictated by Johnson's good sense.

Of the other numerous successors and imitators of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* only one has attained a reputation almost equal to that of its models. This is Oliver Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*, a series of letters appearing in *The Public Ledger* during 1760-1761. Possibly from Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* Goldsmith obtained the idea of having a Chinese philosopher write home to his friend in Peking his impressions and criticisms of England. In addi-

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tion to the genial satire of ridiculous customs, the essays reveal Goldsmith as a man of depth and originality of thought. He anticipated many of the later reforms in social, political, and economic fields. All of these ideas were conveyed in an easy style enlivened by his brisk humor. If Goldsmith were living to-day, he would be one of the most admired columnists.

The place which the periodicals occupied in the literature of the eighteenth century was taken by the magazines in the nineteenth century. Their contributors have continued to direct the thinking of the day and to suggest needed reforms. The movement started by the periodical essayists has, therefore, had an influential growth.

## IX

### THE PERSONAL ESSAY AND THE REFLECTIVE ESSAY

THE periodicals of the eighteenth century created a reading public and aroused sufficient interest in serious essays to warrant the founding of four magazines in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century. *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Quarterly Review*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, and *The London Magazine* provided the essayists with media for their criticisms of literature and remarks upon the state of politics or society. *The Edinburgh Review*, founded by Sydney Smith and Francis Jeffrey, was Whig in politics and moralistic in judgment; *The Quarterly Review* was presided over by the elder Tories under the direction of Scott and Southey; and *Blackwood's*, edited by Lockhart and Wilson, gave the younger Tories an opportunity to express their views. *The London Magazine* was the only strictly literary one of the four with no political bias. In its pages appeared the work of the three outstanding essayists of the first half of the nineteenth century—Lamb, Hazlitt, and De Quincey.

Charles Lamb, prince of the personal essayists, has told us of London life from his school

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days at Christ's Hospital until the time he became "The Superannuated Man." For thirty-five years he was a clerk, first in the South Sea House and then in the India House. During these years Lamb found his recreation in writing his *Essays of Elia*, which reveal his kindness and whimsical humor. When we remember that his life was clouded by the recurrent attacks of insanity to which his sister was subject, we admire still more his cheerful tone. Every essay sparkles with his wit and charm, whether he is criticizing the Elizabethan dramatists, indulging in recollections of his earlier days, imagining what might have been, or writing mere nonsense in a delightful style. He converses with his reader amiably about his experiences, enthusiasms, and ideas. He is a royal entertainer who varies pleasant fooling with tender feeling. The "Dissertation on Roast Pig" and "Dream Children" are the masterpieces of his humor and pathos.

The majority of William Hazlitt's essays were critical and will be considered in the chapter on criticism. He did, however, write some admirable essays on general subjects, such as "The Fight" and "On Going on a Journey." He had a fighting spirit often aroused by his excessively sensitive nature. After he realized that he could never be more than a mediocre painter, he turned to literature by the road of parliamen-

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tary reporting. In *Table Talk* he discusses a variety of topics in a vigorous style and gives bits of autobiographical information.

In 1821 the readers of *The London Magazine* were startled by an essay entitled *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. The essay was based upon Thomas De Quincey's marvelous dreams induced by overdoses of opium, and upon his imaginative interpretation of his experiences. Further descriptions of the effect of opium are to be found in *Suspiria de Profundis* and *Autobiographic Sketches*. The sorrows of his days at Oxford, the troubles of his wanderings in London relieved by the sympathetic Ann of Oxford Street, and the visions of the dreamer are vividly recounted in his impassioned prose. He referred to his style as "an elaborate and pompous sunset." Its chief characteristics are its rhythmical quality and its color. He endeavored to produce the effects of music. In fact, he named one of the finest sections of *The English Mail Coach*, "Dream Fugue." The great fault of this style is its diffuseness. Frequently De Quincey is so carried away by his imagination that he forgets everything but the musical cadence of his phrases. He was a magnificent dreamer oblivious of restraint.

A classicist among these romantic essayists was Walter Savage Landor. His six volumes of *Imaginary Conversations* summon from the past

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well-known historical or literary figures to discourse with each other upon their views of life. Landor seldom stressed the dramatic possibilities of such a dialog as the one between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. He was primarily interested in presenting ideas. His austere prose was particularly suited to such a purpose.

The essayists of the Victorian period were essentially teachers reflecting upon the problems brought by political and industrial changes. John Ruskin, the son of a wealthy wine merchant, received every advantage of education and travel. He began his career as an interpreter of art and ended it as an economic reformer. In *Modern Painters* and *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin developed his theory that true art is the expression of the artist's soul. He also pointed out the connection between architecture and the construction of society, for the architecture of a period is the expression of its ideals. Thus Gothic architecture expressed the aspiration of the religious devotion of the Middle Ages. The *Stones of Venice* explained the doctrine that beauty in art is due to the happiness of the workman and his opportunity to reflect his individuality in his work. Ruskin waged war against materialism because it was destroying natural beauty and standardizing life.

He derived his economic theories to some extent from Carlyle's essays. Carlyle's most origi-

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nal and most characteristic work, *Sartor Resartus*, taught that "Our grand business undoubtedly is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand." This teaching was a corollary of his general philosophy of clothes as developed in *Sartor Resartus*. In an economic essay, he compared the conditions under which the artisans of the Middle Ages worked with the system under modern industrialism. Once again he stressed the sacredness of work for its own sake rather than for the enrichment of the capitalist class. He did not demand charity for the worker, but "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work." Carlyle believed that industrialism by its insincerity and disregard was crushing the foundation of England's national life.

These views Ruskin advocated and developed in the essays in what he called his only true book, *Unto This Last*. The problems of commercial life, according to these essays, arose largely from the selfishness of commerce. The workers were being exploited for materialistic purposes. Their lives were being crushed because the modern system deprived them of joy in their work. Ruskin pleaded for a reorganization of commerce and a fairer attitude toward labor. He tried to persuade manufacturers to produce honest goods. His message to the worker was "Fit yourself for your place." The government was



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to aid in this campaign of reform by establishing training schools, farms and workshops, and homes for the incapacitated, for "that country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings."

The other essays of Ruskin expand his ethical teachings. Some of these were directed particularly to women, notably the collection called *Ethics of the Dust*; others, like *The Crown of Wild Olive*, are of interest chiefly to men. Perhaps the three essays in *Sesame and Lilies* have the most general appeal because of the nature of the subject and the clarity of the style. Altho a variety of subjects receives attention, education is the main theme. In Ruskin's view, "Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave." When both men and women can obtain such an education, happiness will be extended to a greater number of human beings. He advocated the establishment of agencies to carry out this idea.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Robert Louis Stevenson recorded his adventures on his travels in *An Inland Voyage*, *Travels with a Donkey, Across the Plains*, and *The Amateur Emigrant*. In every incident he found romance, for to him the unexpected was the essence of romance. He could make his readers see the most commonplace event in a new

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light because he observed more closely and felt more deeply than the casual traveler.

Stevenson was a conscious artist, ever seeking the exact word to convey his thought. He revised his essays constantly in his endeavor to produce the desired impression. Nowhere are the results of this effort better seen than in *Virginibus Puerisque*, containing some amusing comments as well as excellent advice on the subject of love and marriage. In recent years it has been the fashion to declare that Stevenson's heroic struggle in fighting tuberculosis aroused so much sympathy for him that his literary merit has been greatly overrated. He has given, however, and will continue to give his readers many hours of pleasure.

The culture of the mother country was brought to the new American Republic through the essays of Washington Irving, who spent seventeen years in Europe. After he returned to America, he lived the life of an English country gentleman upon his estate at Sunnyside. *The Sketch Book* familiarized his readers with the English countryside and English customs. Included in this collection were two narratives of the Dutch settlers of New York, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip van Winkle," immortalized upon the American stage by Joseph Jefferson. *Knickerbocker's History of New York* also dealt with the Dutch legends.

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its aim was "to embody the traditions of our city in an amusing form" and to surround it "with those imaginative and whimsical associations so seldom met with in our country, but which live like charms and spells about the cities of the Old World." Irving was a leisurely writer given to repetitions but endowed with a quaint sense of humor. As long as New York stands, his Father Knickerbocker will keep his memory alive.

As Irving endeavored to make his countrymen appreciate the Old World, so Ralph Waldo Emerson explained its thought. He was to America what Carlyle was to England. His *Representative Men* reminds one of *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. He taught the value of courage and self-reliance through his lectures and essays in the *Dial*, a periodical established by Margaret Fuller for the purpose of free discussion. Emerson was the leader of the transcendentalists, thinkers who discussed truths beyond the realm of actual experience. The titles of Emerson's essays suggest the abstract nature of their contents. Among these are "Friendship," "Compensation," "Self-Reliance," "Prudence," "Experience," and "Character." Emerson was far more tolerant of the views of others and far less egotistical than his master, Carlyle. He taught rather than scolded. The keynote of this teaching was his famous motto, "High thinking and

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plain living." Emerson came from a long line of preachers, and in spite of the fact that he resigned from the Unitarian ministry, he was always a preacher.

Emerson's essays are hard to read because of their condensed style. He used the sentence as the unit of composition rather than the paragraph. Hence the reader is impressed by a single statement, but finds the theme of the essay difficult to grasp. His writing has a unity of tone rather than a unity of structure. A reader is rewarded for his labor, however, by the value of Emerson's ideas.

Another member of the New England group was an entertainer, whose essays rival Lamb's for their charm and humor. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes was one of the original contributors to the *Atlantic Monthly* when it began its career in 1857. *The Autocrat at the Breakfast-Table*, *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table*, and *The Poet at the Breakfast-Table* are filled with entertaining conversation, witty phrases, keen observations, and striking comments on those subjects which might be discussed at a typical boarding-house. Holmes transports the reader to the breakfast-table and introduces him to the various characters so that he feels entirely at home.

The popularity and success of the magazines in the twentieth century have greatly encour-

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aged essay-writing among contemporary authors. G. K. Chesterton has inherited the mantle of Ruskin, for he is an ardent medievalist, attacking modern specialization and standardization. He states his views by the method of paradox and antithesis. Like Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc is a defender of the past. He objects to H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* because it minimizes the importance of man and of religion. E. V. Lucas is the twentieth-century Charles Lamb. With a humorous and whimsical view he has written of art, travel, and the aspects of human nature. The "Incomparable Max," as Bernard Shaw has called Max Beerbohm, desires primarily to amuse. He, therefore, often neglects the important for trifles, about which he discourses in a carefully developed style.

Some one has said that the important question concerning the American essay of to-day is how to tell one writer of it from the next. They all write pleasingly, but not very seriously, about a variety of personal interests. Henry van Dyke, Samuel McChord Crothers, and Agnes Repplier represent the elder group, while Simeon Strunsky, Heywood Broun, and Christopher Morley are the exponents of the younger school of essayists.

## THE SATIRICAL ESSAY AND THE CONTROVERSIAL ESSAY

THE satirical essay and the controversial essay seldom reach the rank of great literature, because they deal with current beliefs or abuses and are produced under the sway of temporary passions. A few of them, however, have outlived their age on account of the universality of their subjects or the pointedness of their style. A clever thrust at a worthy opponent always arouses admiration. The ridicule of foibles and the exposure of absurdities of any age afford us amusement even tho we feel the sting of the lash, for human nature has been essentially the same since the days of the earliest satire.

In the second century of the Christian era Lucian, a Greek born in Syria, finally settled in Athens after he had spent several years in the East. He was a skeptic, who declared that religion was superstition and philosophy mere quibbling. The *Dialogues of the Gods* attacks the adherents of the older faiths as hypocritical and insincere. The gods are shown to be ridiculous in their whims and selfish in their actions. Lucian treated famous men with no more respect. In *Dialogues of the Dead* he points out the

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conceit, the irritableness, and the unimportance of the great. Only Menippus, the clever rogue, who laughs at life, has achieved any satisfaction either in this world or the next. The *Sale of the Philosophers* satirizes the different systems of philosophy by presenting their chief exponents in the slave market. This plan offers Lucian an opportunity for much witty dialog—showing the uselessness of philosophy.

The imaginative power of Lucian reminds one of Swift. *A True Story* is a forerunner of *Gulliver's Travels*. Lucian characterizes this work in his preface as being "enticing not only for the novelty of its subject, for the humor of its plan, and because I tell all kinds of lies in a plausible and specious way, but also because everything in my story is a more or less comical parody of one or another of the poets, historians, and philosophers of old, who have written much that smacks of miracles and fables." He tells how his ship was swallowed by a whale, how after nearly two weeks he and his companions escaped from the belly of the whale, how they visited strange lands, how they took a trip to the moon, and how they experienced a host of wonderful adventures. Lucian was a great parodist and humorist, commenting shrewdly upon the credulity of humanity.

The folly and stupidity of man also made a deep impression upon the Dutch humanist,

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Erasmus, as he traveled about Europe in the sixteenth century. Erasmus refused to align himself definitely with any group of humanists or reformers of his day. Dominated by a spirit of moderation, he was a seeker for truth. In the acquirement of wisdom lay the solution of man's problems, but the majority blindly followed the dictates of church or state. To bring to the attention of his age its faults, Erasmus wrote *In Praise of Folly*, an attack upon every class from the theologian to the vagrant on the highway. He pointed out that the worship of folly was widespread, for her temples were in the hearts of men. The success of the book was immediate, particularly because of its virulent satire upon different ranks of the clergy. All thinkers were demanding a reform of the abuses of the church, either by a thorough reorganization or by separation as advocated in the treatises of Martin Luther. The sarcasm of *In Praise of Folly* and the *Colloquies* is as potent to-day as in the sixteenth century, for some of the follies are so ingrained in human nature that three hundred years of new learning have not eradicated them.

Another aspect of religious controversy, that between the Puritans and Churchmen in England, turned the poet John Milton from his literary pursuits for twenty years. From 1640 to 1660 he defended the Commonwealth against the attacks of the Royalists. So loyally did he



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serve as Secretary of Foreign Tongues to the Council of State of the Commonwealth that he lost his eyesight. The first group of his controversial essays consists of the five Anti-Episcopal Pamphlets against the overbearing demands of the bishops of the Anglican church. Then followed the pamphlets on education, divorce, freedom of the press, the divine right of kings, and the establishment of the Commonwealth. The *Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing* has been cited again and again when the question of the freedom of the press has been paramount. The immediate cause for the writing of this plea was the petition to Parliament from the Stationers' Company, which claimed that Milton had infringed the Ordinance of 1643 by publishing his tract on divorce without the necessary authority. The main arguments in Milton's defense are that censorship does not suppress bad books because they will be circulated surreptitiously, and that censorship discourages learning because scholars will not submit to the judgment of "a few illiterate and illiberal individuals" as to what is true or false. With forceful reasoning Milton elaborated his points. His enormous learning provided him with illustrations to prove his arguments, not only in this pamphlet but also in his *Defense of the English People*. Milton's prose is extremely hard to read because he had a tendency to use long,

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involved sentences and a highly Latinized diction. These qualities, however, gave it a dignity seldom equaled in literature.

A contemporary of Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, defended the faith of a physician and scientist against the criticisms upon his *Religio Medici*. To-day this book, together with his *Urn Burial*, is read more for its majestic and sonorous style than for its reconciliation of science and religion. Browne was a gentle and tolerant writer, who explained his views with no rancor against his opponents.

The leisurely defense of fishing by Isaak Walton begins with a conversation between a falconer, hunter, and angler upon the relative merits of their sports, but soon the fisherman becomes the chief speaker. *The Compleat Angler* would persuade anyone of the pleasures of fishing. For its descriptions of nature alone it is worth reading.

The most bitter of English satirists was the disappointed and dissatisfied Jonathan Swift. The last line of his epitaph, "Where bitter indignation can no longer lacerate his heart," indicates the tone of his life and writings. Swift was indignant at the attitude of his friends; he was indignant at his appointment as Dean of St. Patrick's in Dublin; he was indignant at the treatment of Ireland by the government. Finally he railed at humanity in general with

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the venom of a diseased mind. Proud and sensitive, Swift suffered at the injustice about him. Death deprived him of his beloved Stella and other close friends, leaving him alone in his last years. The Victorian writers judged him harshly because of the virulence of his satire, but he is more to be pitied.

When Swift was secretary to Sir William Temple, a controversy concerning the superiority of ancient over modern books was raging among the English scholars. *The Battle of the Books* held up to ridicule the pedantry of the classicists. Next the quarrels of the churches received Swift's attention in an allegorical satire, called, after the proverbial expression for a ridiculous story, *Tale of a Tub*. He did not confine himself very closely to his theme, but attacked the vanity of the age and kindred faults. Even the critics of the day were treated to a thorough drubbing. This book exerted considerable influence upon Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. In his political pamphlets, largely in defense of Ireland, Swift indulged in personalities. He did much to arouse the Irish to a sense of nationalism. Other essays, such as *A Modest Proposal* and *Directions to Servants*, flay abuses by making astounding suggestions, such as the proposal that the poverty of the Irish might be relieved by the sale of their children for food. Swift

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never hesitated to speak frankly and even disgustingly when his scorn demanded it.

Swift's masterpiece, *Gulliver's Travels*, is derived from the work of Lucian through the French Rabelais. Gulliver's voyages to Lilliput, the land of the pigmies; to Brobdingnag, the land of the giants; to Laputa and neighboring lands; and to the country of the Houyhnhnms, a nation of horses served by the disgusting Yahoos, have delighted generations of children because of the surprizing adventures and entertaining narrative. But Swift wrote the book to vent his scorn in an ironic tone upon the customs of England and the habits of mankind. Swift's satire was very effective, because he wrote in a pointed, precise style, with no elaborations or angry outbursts. His ridicule of the vices of society has not lost its keenness in two hundred years.

The satire of Swift was the subject of one of the essays in Thackeray's *English Humorists*, a collection of critical essays upon eighteenth-century writers. Thackeray's own vein of genial satire makes *The Four Georges*, another study of eighteenth-century society, and the *Book of Snobs* delightful reading. These rambling discourses expose the pretensions of society with characteristic wit. Thackeray hated hypocrisy and sham, two very prevalent traits of Victorian England, and he spared no efforts to strike at

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them. To some extent his essays remind the reader of the character-essay of the seventeenth century, for Thackeray was a master at drawing well-known types.

Other satirists and controversialists have destroyed the permanent value of their work by narrowing its scope or by trying too hard to be clever. They belong distinctly to the minor literature of their countries and their periods. They were aroused by temporary issues and failed to make their work universal in appeal. To understand their essays it is necessary to have a comprehensive knowledge of the conditions which inspired them. Still others have chosen to ridicule earnest and sincere reformers for the sake of furnishing amusement. This is too often the fault of our modern satirists. Their attacks lose force because they are directed against efforts we must admire, no matter how much we may disagree with them. If his works are going to live, a satirist must strike at the basic prejudices and ever-present follies of human society, taking different manifestations in different ages, but stressing similar underlying traits.

## XI

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THE literary critic analyzes a book in order to determine its value in relation to other productions of a similar nature. He then interprets the work for his readers and helps them to understand the purpose of the author. He must account for the success or failure of a work; he must acquaint his readers with its characteristics and recommend what is good. As Sainte-Beuve said, "he is the secretary of the public." He saves the public time and labor by indicating the contents of a book and by suggesting beneficial and enjoyable reading. Professor Saintsbury defines criticism as "the endeavor to find, to know, to love, to recommend not only the best, but all good that has been known and thought and written in the world. It shows how to grasp and how to enjoy." To accomplish his task successfully the critic must have read widely; he must have a real appreciation for literature; he must not be prejudiced; he must have rare good judgment; and he must be able to present his conclusions in a persuasive and entertaining manner.

In the history of criticism we may distinguish four major schools: the informational, the im-

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pressionistic, the judicial, and the inspirational. The informational school states as accurately as possible both the good and bad points of a work and leaves the determination of its value to the reader. No attempt is made to give a definite place to the work. The impressionistic critic gives the personal effect of the book upon him at the time when he reads it. The personal equation is the important factor. If the reader happens to have the same type of mind as the critic, he will find the impressionistic critic a satisfactory guide. Such a critic, however, is very likely to be swayed by prejudices or temporary enthusiasms. The judicial school formulates definite standards from a comprehensive study of literature and classifies the subject under discussion according to these standards. The value of the criticism naturally depends upon the adequacy of the standards. The inspirational school thoroughly understands the author, sympathizes with him, and leads the reader to him so that a bond of communion is established between them. Sometimes in a phrase, seemingly the result of intuitive understanding, the inspirational critic will characterize an author. Such a phrase is that of Coleridge when he speaks of Shakespeare as "our myriad-minded Shakespeare."

Aristotle's theories of criticism in the *Poetics* have already been considered in the chapter on

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the philosophers. The third book of his *Rhetoric* discusses the style and arrangement of a speech with considerable attention given to diction and figures of speech. Fragments of other works of Greek criticism have come down to us mainly through quotation by Latin authors, but the only important treatise after Aristotle is *On the Sublime*, generally accredited to Longinus, who lived about 250 A.D. Longinus stressed the importance of weighty thought and intense passion expressed in appropriate words. He also suggested that the author should consider what the judgment of posterity might be concerning his work. Longinus enforces his points by criticisms of selections from various Greek and Latin authors. He deserves our recognition because of these quotations, for thus he preserved some of the best of classical literature.

The most famous critical work of Latin literature is Horace's poem, *Art of Poetry*. Its fame is due to the influence it exerted upon the European critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rather than to its critical worth. Horace stated the doctrines of unity and order, discussed the use of appropriate meters, and stressed the importance of right thinking. The purpose of the poet is "either to instruct, or to delight, or to combine the two." Numerous examples from poetry and the Greek drama illustrate the principles. At least, Horace takes his



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art seriously, even tho he submits it to rigid control. The poem abounds in epigrams quoted by successive generations, for Horace had the ability to state his thoughts effectively.

Among the Romans the study of rhetoric occupied a prominent place because it was the chief training for the lawyer. The Emperor Vespasian endowed a professorship in rhetoric and appointed Quintilian as the first incumbent. After twenty years of experience in teaching and in practising law he wrote a text-book on *The Training of the Orator*. He discusses the education of the orator from the earliest period throughout life, recommending a thorough foundation in general culture. He enumerates authors to be studied and comments upon their books. Hence he has left us an excellent review of Latin literature as well as some comparisons of Latin and Greek authors. For Quintilian, Cicero was the ideal orator.

The imitation of classical models and forms of composition in seventeenth and eighteenth century literature gave a new impetus to the art of criticism. The motto of the classicists was "Study the Ancients," while the modernists defended the native methods and verse forms of the sixteenth century. The leader of the classicists in France was Nicholas Boileau, whose views were derived from Horace and Longinus. His *Art of Poetry* and *Reflections upon Longi-*

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*nus* laid down the rules of art as followed by the Latin authors and their French imitators, particularly Racine. The essence of these rules was formalism and standardization. In his criticisms of contemporary literature Boileau was generally just in the application of his principles. His influence was widespread until the romantic movement of the early nineteenth century rebelled against the restrictions imposed by the classical school.

Since we have already mentioned the critical nature of Ben Jonson's *Discoveries* in the chapter on the aphoristic essay, John Dryden may be considered the forerunner of the classical school in England. His critical essays were published as prefaces to his plays and poems. Altho Dryden was somewhat burdened by his adherence to rules and by his violent prejudices, he had the ability to appreciate good work. His essay on Chaucer reveals a discriminating understanding of the fourteenth-century poet. Another of his critical prefaces defended the practise of the English dramatists who wrote rimed tragedy. He sometimes was careless about facts and occasionally made rather glaring errors, but these do not seriously mar the value of his criticism. Dryden's prose style is admirable for its precision and clearness.

Boileau's influence is easily traceable in Pope's poetical *Essay on Criticism*. After describing

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the attitude the critic should have, Pope enumerates the rules to guide him. One of them may still be recommended to all who assay the task of criticism:

“A little learning is a dangerous thing;  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring.”

Like his French master, Pope was the advocate of order and reason. His comments on various writers do not suggest any careful study. They are rather arbitrary.

Dr. Johnson defined literature as “the interpreter of nature and the legislator of mankind.” The central rules of his critical code were that literature should teach unknown truths or recommend known truths. He judged works upon the basis of their moral teachings with little regard to the power of imagination. He also gave considerable attention to technique, delighting to point out mixed metaphors and ineffective constructions. At times he contradicted views formerly expressed, but he was a robust critic, for he did not hesitate to state emphatically his conclusions. His reputation as a literary dictator was so firmly established that even Goldsmith submitted to him poems to be criticized, and accepted his revisions.

The theories of Boileau came to Germany through the works of Gottsched and Lessing. By his treatise on the principles of neo-classicism,

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Johann Christoph Gottsched, professor of poetry at Leipzig, engaged in a literary war with two Swiss professors of Zurich, who looked to Milton for true poetic expression. After a barrage of dull pamphlets from both sides Gottsched was defeated and superseded by the younger critics. His main service to German literature consisted in a reform of the theater. He prepared six volumes of plays for a reorganized German stage under the title, *The German Theater according to the Rules of the Ancient Greeks and Romans*.

Lessing was the leader of the revolt against the classicism of Gottsched. He drew from all sources, showing equal admiration for the theories of Aristotle and the practise of Shakespeare. He dethroned neo-classicism by going back to the fountain-head of criticism, Aristotle, and disregarding the Latin and French interpretations. The basis of his teaching was the search for truth. The *Hamburg Dramaturgy* was originally intended to consist of comments on the plays and acting of a German National Theater at Hamburg, but soon it became a means for general criticism on dramatic subjects. By his exposition of the methods of Sophocles and Shakespeare he freed the German drama from the influence of French classical drama. His *Letters on Modern Literature* had previously made a plea for the independence of German literature from foreign models.

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Lessing's interest in Greek culture caused him to write *Laocoön*, a discussion of the differences between poetry and the plastic arts. The poet must deal with actions, while the painter or sculptor has for his subject "bodies with their visible properties." The aim of both is to give pleasure through the portrayal of beauty. The poet, however, lacking the materials of the painter, gives merely the effect of beauty. He suggests rather than describes in detail. Lessing expresses his ideas with remarkable clearness and eloquence. He is a master of German prose.

The successor of Lessing was August Wilhelm Schlegel, the translator of Shakespeare. His service to German Romanticism in producing a masterly translation of the great Elizabethan dramatist and in writing critical notes upon the plays cannot be exaggerated. His *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* and his *Lectures on Belles-Lettres and Art* brought him the discipleship of Mme. de Staël and the admiration of Carlyle and Coleridge. Schlegel was a comparative critic drawing his examples of romanticism largely from England.

The disciple of Schlegel introduced German Romanticism to France by her *On Germany*. The daughter of Necker and of Gibbon's first love, Mme. de Staël was brought up in the intellectual atmosphere of the French salon during the reign

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of Louis XV. Her participation in the politics of the French Revolution and her opposition to Bonaparte caused her exile from France a number of times. Part of her exile she spent in Germany, where she found much to her taste in literature. Her criticism sets the standards of moral or social perfection as a means for determining the worth of a literary production. Her most important critical work, *On Literature considered in its Bearing upon Social Constitutions*, applies her theory to the literature of the South as contrasted with the literature of the North. Her conclusion, stated in *On Germany*, is that "Romantic literature alone is still capable of perfectibility, because, having its roots in our own soil, it alone can grow and gain fresh vigor; it expresses our religion; it recalls our past; it avails itself of our personal impressions by which to stir our emotions."

The romantic movement in England produced two outstanding works of criticism, Wordsworth's "Preface to the Second Edition" of *Lyrical Ballads* and Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. Wordsworth defended his method of writing the poems contained in *Lyrical Ballads* and explained his views of the subjects and diction suitable for poetry. In the humble, everyday life of the people he found greater truthfulness than in the heroic and unusual occurrences. The naturalness of their passions and

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the reality of their experiences would have a strong appeal for the reader because he would have some knowledge of them from his own experiences. Furthermore, rural life was nearer to nature; from it Wordsworth had gained much comfort and learned many lessons. His theory of poetic diction was revolutionary, for he believed that the poet should use the ordinary language of every-day life. The language of poetry need be no different from the language of prose. The poet could express the deepest emotions in simple, unadorned diction. These doctrines guided Wordsworth to some extent in his writing of poetry, as we shall see in a later chapter.

Seventeen years after the appearance of the Preface, Coleridge discussed in the *Biographia Literaria* Wordsworth's theories. He disagreed with his friend on a number of points, stressing the fact that the composition of poetry is essentially different from that of prose. After a careful analysis of Wordsworth's poetry, Coleridge stated that most of his defects came from his adherence to his theory. Coleridge's own theory was that poetry should "lend the charm of imagination to the real and force of reality to the imaginary." The critic should "find the inner springs of life in each work of art, and so put us on the track which the artist followed in the act of creation." Other chapters of *Biographia Literaria* deal with German tran-

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scendentalism and philosophy, as well as with literature, for Coleridge never resisted the temptation to digress wherever his trend of thinking might lead him.

No student of Shakespeare should neglect the illuminating comments in Coleridge's *Lectures on Shakespeare*. He brushed aside the rules of classical criticism and went to the plays themselves for an evaluation of the dramatist. He revived the interest of English readers in the Elizabethan drama and drew their attention to the power of Milton. His comprehensive understanding, together with his sane judgment, has earned for him Professor Saintsbury's appropriate designation of "the very Bible of criticism."

Another critic of the period who was partly responsible for the revival of interest in the older English literature was William Hazlitt. He began his literary career as a parliamentary reporter for the London *Morning Chronicle*. In this paper and others appeared his criticisms of the dramas and actors of the day. These he later collected in *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* and *View of the English Stage*. From the stage he turned to English literature in general, of which he had a wide but rather superficial knowledge. His criticism was often marred by his prejudices and tendency to repetition. He had a passion for literature of every period, as



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the *Lectures on the English Poets*, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, and *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* testify. Hazlitt's method was largely impressionistic. He was given to "picking out the beautiful passages that I like." Hence his remarks about particular scenes or parts of a work are excellent. He aroused an enthusiasm for literature in his readers and revealed to them unknown sources of pleasure. What greater service to the general reading public can a critic give? For this alone he deserves his place among the great English critics.

The founder of the comparative method of modern criticism was Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve. He considered the critic the secretary of the public, studying and interpreting literature with the aim of definitely passing judgment upon the merits and defects of a book. He also pointed out the necessity for the critic to determine the object of the author. Thus he judged works not by classical rules but by their success in accomplishing what the writer purposed. During 1850-1852 his Monday chats on literature, the *Causeries du Lundi*, appeared in the *Constitutionnel* and the *Moniteur*. At this period he had already gained a reputation by his articles on the French literature of the sixteenth century. Sainte-Beuve defined a classic as "an author who has enriched the human mind;—who

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has discovered some unequivocal moral truth or again has seized upon some eternal passion in that heart where all seemed to be known and explored;—who has spoken to all in a style of his own.” This was the creed by which he tested French literature and explained its qualities to his readers.

But more important even than Sainte-Beuve’s critical estimates was his method. He began his articles with a few general remarks about the work under discussion; then he gave a biographical sketch of the author; after this he examined particular qualities with specific quotations, and finally he concluded his criticism with a comparative placing of the work. The reader was thus enabled to obtain a comprehensive view of the author and to understand the relationship of his work to his life and to the literature of his period.

The English advocate of comparative criticism, Matthew Arnold, formulated two general standards concerning greatness of action and the grand style. “All depends on subject” was his guiding principle. His *Essays in Criticism* are more than a discussion of a single work or author. Arnold considered the conditions of society and the circumstances under which the works were produced. Furthermore, he could give reasons for his statements, so that he aroused confidence in his judgment. Arnold preached the

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broad outlook of culture to his generation in such books as *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*. The Greek ideal, for which he fought so strenuously, has generally been adopted not only through his own repetition of the need for culture and his attacks upon the Philistines of materialism, but also through the efforts of the converts he made. Arnold was consistent in his criticism, since he distrusted personal taste and adhered to standards. Whatever literature he touched, he made more comprehensible, for he was an inspired and inspiring critic. Perhaps to-day his doctrine of "sweetness and light" is not so vital as it was to his generation; yet his thunderings against lack of thought in the majority still convey some wholesome messages.

The main figures of English literary criticism of the last quarter of the nineteenth century were Leslie Stephen, John Addington Symonds, and Walter Pater. Stephen's studies of English thought and literature in the eighteenth century and his *Hours in a Library* reveal his excellent judgment and pleasing humor. Of Symonds's *The Renaissance in Italy*, Professor Saintsbury, the eminent authority upon the history of criticism, wrote, "There is no better historical treatment of a foreign literature in English."

Pater belonged to the impressionistic school and derived from Anatole France some of his

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views. He stressed the pleasure of sensation. The duty of the critic is to feel the charm of literature and then to interpret it to others. His studies, the most notable of which are *Renaissance* and *Appreciations*, apply these principles to various authors. Pater was a very careful writer, paying much attention to the beauty of expression. His ideas and style appealed strongly to the younger critics of the early years of the twentieth century.

The only American critic of prominence during the nineteenth century was James Russell Lowell. As editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *North American Review* he came to be highly regarded for his scholarship, his Yankee shrewdness; and his natural diplomacy. Recognizing this diplomatic gift, the President of the United States appointed him Minister to Spain and later transferred him to England, where he did much to bring about a better understanding between the two English-speaking peoples. He had a sincere appreciation for literature, but had a tendency to allow his likes and dislikes to control his judgment. A recent writer has stated that his *Among My Books* and *My Study Windows* have nothing very important to say about the writers discussed. These essays in the *Atlantic* did, however, inform American readers concerning the merits of Dante, Chaucer, Wordsworth, and other great names in literature.

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The period following the death of Sainte-Beuve was marked in French criticism by the conflict between the judicial school and the impressionistic school. Hippolyte Taine declared himself a pupil of Sainte-Beuve, whose theories he carried to an extreme in applying the scientific method to criticism, particularly concerning the nationality and the environment of the writer. He defended his ideas in *The Ideal in Art* and in the preface to his *History of English Literature*.

Ferdinand Brunetière took up the cudgels in defense of the objective school of criticism in an attack upon Anatole France's *La Vie Littéraire*. Brunetière claimed that the whole object of criticism was to classify and judge, while France proclaimed that "the good critic is he who narrates the adventures of his own mind among the masterpieces." Brunetière had a vast amount of learning and a command of argument. France, however, had a charm of style and a force of satire, which inevitably found the weak points in his opponent's arguments. At least France scored a telling point when he indicated the importance of the personal equation in all criticism. He was ably seconded in his reply to Brunetière by Jules Lemaître's *Contemporaries*.

The disciples of Sainte-Beuve in Italy, Francesco de Sanctis and Giosue Carducci, did much to increase the reputation of Italian writers.

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They studied the texts carefully, investigated the backgrounds of the authors, and interpreted the beauties of Italian literature. The dean of contemporary Italian criticism is Benedetto Croce, who has developed a philosophy of criticism based upon the idea that "art is vision or intuition." *The Essence of the Esthetic* explains his theory of art, while numerous essays have resulted from his studies of the classics of European literature and from his investigation of modern Italian literature. Unfortunately, Croce's philosophizing and somewhat involved style make him difficult to read.

The most widely read of modern critics was George Brandes, Professor in the University of Copenhagen—from which he was expelled for his radical views. For a time he lived in Germany, but was later recalled. The range of Brandes's interests was extensive. He wrote on such a diverse company as Ibsen, Nietzsche, Chateaubriand, Byron, Heine, Hugo, Shakespeare, Cæsar, Voltaire, and Michelangelo. The work, however, which established his reputation as the outstanding continental critic of the last fifty years is *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature*. Of it he said, "I go down to the foundations of real life, and show how the emotions which find their expression in literature arise in the human heart." The *Main Currents* is a classic of comparative criticism.

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The critics of the twentieth century have been largely recruited from the ranks of the college professors and journalists. The creative writers have also examined the works of their contemporaries. Professor Saintsbury's *History of Criticism* and scholarly essays entitle him to be considered the dean of English critics. William Archer, Edmund Gosse, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Ernest Rhys, and Edward Garnett have introduced authors like Ibsen and Turgenev to the English public and have increased the appreciation for English literature by their illuminating studies. A younger group of critics, among whom are Rebecca West, Frank Swinnerton, Hugh Walpole, and Virginia Woolf, has pointed out the more recent developments in literature.

In America criticism has become a recognized profession, for the weekly reviews and literary magazines offer unlimited opportunities for discussion of the merits of both old and new writers. The demand for popular lectures on literature has further encouraged the critics. Among the professors who have guided the taste of the reading public are such well-known names as Brander Matthews, Richard Burton, Bliss Perry, Carl Van Doren, Stuart Sherman, and William Lyon Phelps. Perhaps the latter has done more than any other lecturer to arouse a general interest in books by his enthusiastic comments. The journalists and editors seem to vie with

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the professors in explaining the classics and in recommending new authors. Max Eastman's *Enjoyment of Poetry*, the books of Walter Prichard Eaton and Edwin Bjorkman on the drama, Paul Elmer More's *Shelburne Essays*, and the studies of Van Wyck Brooks, John Macy, and Robert Cortes Holliday have aided many American readers to obtain a better understanding of literature.

In the advance guard of criticism in America are H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan. As co-editors of *The Smart Set* and *The American Mercury*, they have been looking for undiscovered talent for the last fifteen years. They have defended Dreiser, Lewis, and O'Neill as representatives of realism against the attacks of detractors. They have always been outspoken and often clever in their remarks about literature, the stage, and life, because they are apostles of free discussion. Never are they happier than when they have an opportunity to attack some long accepted convention. The title of Mencken's series of essays is indicative of this attitude. He calls them *Prejudices*. In one essay he says, "The only thing I respect is intellectual honesty, of which, of course, intellectual courage is a necessary part." Nathan has told us that his purpose has merely been to express his personal opinions regarding the drama. His main contention is that drama is artificial life and should be



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judged from that point of view and not as real life. Despite their distrust of the masses and their disdain of the erudite, Mencken and Nathan have assumed qualities of both groups. In a radical manner they are earnestly endeavoring to promote learning and spread culture. Someone has very aptly referred to them as "highbrows in disguise."

The European critics have also tended to re-evaluate the classics and to regard sympathetically the experiments of new writers. They have likewise given some attention to literatures other than their own, with the purpose of introducing foreign authors to their readers. In France the traditions of Sainte-Beuve, Brunetière, and Anatole France have been carried on by Emile Faguet, Gustave Lanson, Marcel Schwab, Rémy de Gourmont, Paul Souday, André Chevrillon, Emile Legouis, and numerous others. French literature has always been rich in the value and brilliance of its critical essays. Russian critics have recently been making studies of their famous writers from Puskin and Gogol to the symbolists. Unfortunately, very few of these essays have been translated into other languages, but the reader may gain some idea of their work from Prince Mirsky's *Contemporary Russian Literature*. The four outstanding names in contemporary Spanish criticism are Miguel de Unamuno, Azorín, Menéndez y Pelayo, and

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Ramón Menéndez Pidal. These men have discussed a variety of subjects in a scholarly but entertaining manner. The students of Spanish literature have praised them for their ability to state their ideas clearly and to give life to the most technical of literary and philosophical studies.

From a consideration of the critical essay in contemporary literature we may draw the conclusion that the tendency is to arouse a more widespread and intelligent interest in books. The critics desire to stimulate thought concerning the problems of civilization presented by representative authors. They bend every effort toward making literature in all its phases as attractive as possible. This aim they accomplish by new studies of the lives of authors and of the relationship of famous books to life. The critical essay is no longer written primarily for the school, but for the general reader who wishes a guide to "not only the best, but all good that has been known and thought and written in the world."

## XII

### THE ORATION

ORATIONS are usually dull reading, because the intonation of the orator's voice and the expressiveness of his gestures are lacking. Often we go to hear a person speak, regardless of his subject, for we are taken with his personality. He has acquired a reputation for eloquence, such as that of William Jennings Bryan, or is noted for his humorous sallies. The orator appeals to the emotions by his illustrations and stories, and to the reason by his arguments. He enforces his points by effective diction. The attitude of the audience also affects the quality of his oration. When he feels that his hearers are sympathetic, he has a comparatively easy task to persuade them to accept his views. But he prefers a hostile audience to an indifferent one, for the latter resists all his efforts. Oratory has been defined as "public discourse of the argumentative type, in which truth of personal import and issue is presented and enforced."

Another reason that orations are infrequently read is that they are occasional. They are given for a definite purpose or celebration, such as the commemoration of Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, or Independence Day. Political

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orations are especially ephemeral because the issues which were vital fifty years ago have only a historical interest for posterity. Sometimes, however, the orator has been so inspired by the spirit of his subject that he has voiced ideas of permanent value. The passion of the moment has not obscured essential truths. Instead of adapting himself exclusively to his period and his audience, the orator has appealed to humanity in general. He has interpreted the ideas of his day and has explained the spirit of a people. These orations may be read with much enjoyment.

As the orator is presenting his ideas by means of the spoken word, he must take pains to be clear. When a reader does not understand a paragraph, he may reread it. But the spoken word is gone as soon as it has been uttered. Hence to enforce his points the orator repeats them in other words. At times this habit makes the reading of orations tiresome.

Probably orations will be read even less in the future than they have been in the past, since the radio has brought the spoken word to so many millions. Yet a few orations of the past deserve a permanent place in literature on account of their admirable construction or eloquence of diction.

In Athens oratory was a principal subject of study, for any citizen might have to plead his

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cause before the jury. Moreover, every citizen had the privilege of stating his views in the public assembly. If he were unable to compose a speech, he hired a professional rhetorician to write it for him.

The Greek critics of the Alexandrian period choose ten orators of the fifth and fourth centuries B. C. as outstanding. Three of these, Lysias, Isocrates, and Demosthenes, have been known to generations of students of Greek, because their orations have been read in college courses. Lysias and Isocrates devoted most of their time to writing speeches for clients, but they spoke occasionally before the assembly. Lysias's oration against Eratosthenes denounces the tyrant for the death of the orator's brother. Isocrates praised the Athenians in his *Panegyricus* and urged them to make a stand against the Persians.

The greatest orator of antiquity was Demosthenes, whose first success was in the five orations delivered against his guardians. He had inherited an estate from his father, but had lost it through the unscrupulousness of these guardians. To earn a living he became an advocate in the courts of Athens. By constant practise and by studying the orations of Pericles as reported by Thucydides he soon gained eminence. The story of how he placed pebbles in his mouth and spoke on the seashore above

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the roar of the waves has been used again and again to illustrate the quality of perseverance.

Demosthenes looked with apprehension at the rising Macedonian monarchy. He said that Philip planned to conquer Athens by policy or force. In eleven orations delivered between 352 B. C. and 340 B. C. he endeavored to arouse the Athenians to a sense of their danger. He warned them against the proposals of the peace party led by the orator Æschines. At last the successes of Philip brought panic to the citizens, and acting upon the advice of Demosthenes they made an alliance with Thebes. Unfortunately, the allies were defeated at Chæronea in 338, but two years afterward Greece was temporarily saved by the death of Philip.

After the death of Philip, Ctesiphon proposed that Demosthenes be given a golden crown for his services to the state. Æschines opposed the measure as unconstitutional. The oration *On the Crown* is Demosthenes's brilliant account of his position and public life in Athens. After an apology for speaking about himself he attacks with sharp sarcasm his opponent. The whole oration is a fervid appeal to the ideals of honor and of patriotism. Shortly after this great victory Demosthenes was found guilty of accepting a bribe and went into exile. When the Greeks were finally conquered, he poisoned himself to

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escape falling into the hands of the victorious Macedonians.

The power of Demosthenes to sway his audience was due to his eloquence. His style has all the vigor of his intense personality. He was essentially an emotional speaker, moving his audience by every appeal known to the art of the orator. At times he gained his effect by subtle suggestion. He never hesitated to use oaths or colloquial expressions, provided that they made his orations more vivid. He realized that he could accomplish his purpose most effectively by arousing his audience to a sense of their danger or of their power.

By translating into Latin the orations of Demosthenes and the other Greek orators, Cicero prepared himself for a career as an orator and statesman. His aim was to acquire a command of language, for he said, "What is there in the world more extraordinary than eloquence, whether we consider the admiration of its hearers, the reliance of those who stand in need of assistance, or the good will it procures from those whom it defends." In three books, *Concerning the Orator*, *Brutus*, and *The Orator*, he discussed the training of a speaker and drew the portrait of an ideal orator, taking examples from Greek and Roman oratory.

The four orations *Against Catiline* and the fourteen *Philippics* against Mark Antony are his

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most distinguished speeches, altho several others, such as those delivered at the prosecution of Verres, the defense of Archias, and the advocacy of the Manilian Law, reach a high level of excellence. Cicero was the defender of the Roman Republic from attacks from within as Demosthenes was the defender of Athens from foreign conquest. He warned the senate and the Roman people that their liberties and lives were endangered. With admirable lucidity and logical arguments he builds up his case until the overwhelming weight of evidence crushes his opponent.

Generations of schoolboys have studied Cicero for his finished style and his command of the Latin language. He gained his effect by the use of contrast, balance, and rhythm of phrase. His dramatic power is the result of his method of direct address. There must have been a sensation in the Roman Senate on that morning when Cicero turned toward the man who was planning to murder him and cried, "How far wilt thou, O Catiline! abuse our patience?" By a series of rhetorical questions or ironical references he secured the attention of his audience. The very characteristics which made him an effective orator cause him at times to be tedious to the modern reader. He had a tendency to diffuseness and redundancy. Yet we forget his faults, for we are profoundly impressed with his power



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of characterization and the force of his eloquence.

The lectures and debates of the schoolmen of the Middle Ages and the scholars of the Renaissance were largely expositions of theology. Many of them show the absurdity of arguing for the mere sake of arguing, such as the debate concerning how many angels can stand on the point of a needle. Their only value is their revelation of the type of learning of the day.

Two bishops, Bossuet and Fénelon, in the age of Louis XIV gained renown for their sermons and orations. Much of their work was controversial and explanatory of theological doctrines. Bossuet was also noted for his funeral orations. He was sincere and generally fair in his discourses, altho he was capable of severe denunciation when the occasion demanded. His controversy with Fénelon resulted in the condemnation of the latter's doctrine by the Pope. Fénelon's *Télémaque* describes in excellent prose a state of society which became a pattern for some of the social reformers of the next century.

As the eighteenth century was a period of political and social revolutions, oratory flourished in parliaments and pulpits. The English statesmen were discussing the attitude of the American colonies and siding for or against leniency. The champion of America was Edmund Burke, who entered Parliament in 1766. He had

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been born and educated in Dublin, but had decided to remain in England after several years of traveling throughout the country. During his long term in the House of Commons, Burke always took the side of the oppressed. He pointed out the cruelty of the English policy in India and denounced the African slave trade as well as England's tyranny toward her colonies in America. Burke's speech *On Conciliation with America* taught that "representation was the sovereign remedy for every evil." The *Impeachment of Warren Hastings* is Burke's masterpiece of invective. In spite of their brilliance, Burke's speeches failed to gain support, because they were too intellectual and philosophical. Burke was fond of theorizing and adhered closely to the classical style. His resounding periods and rhetorical flourishes astound the reader, but they also tire him.

At the same time in America Patrick Henry was making much more effective pleas for American liberty. The simplicity of his style and the directness of his statements aroused his hearers to action. His declaration, "I am not a Virginian, but an American," was the keynote of the first Continental Congress. In 1775 he delivered before the Second Revolutionary Convention of Virginia the short but powerful "*Give me Liberty or Give me Death*" Speech.

The various political, social, and religious

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movements during the last hundred years have been the stimuli for a great deal of oratory. The majority of the speeches have been forgotten because of their temporary nature. To read them with any degree of understanding would demand a study of the conditions or theories which produced them. Some of them were so prejudiced in tone that their ardent partizanship has seriously marred their eloquence. Others have handled the subject convincingly but are extremely dull reading. Of all the modern orators we shall, therefore, discuss only three, whom we may consider spokesmen of three aspects of Americanism. Daniel Webster was the outstanding American statesman of the first half of the nineteenth century. An authority upon constitutional law, he gave his energies to the defense and preservation of the spirit of the constitution. His *Reply to Hayne*, delivered in 1830, insured national unity for another thirty years. He continually worked for compromise, regardless of his own political fate. In fact, he ruined his political career by his *Seventh of March Speech* in 1850, by which he aroused the antagonism of his New England constituents because he supported the Fugitive Slave Law. Whittier's poem, "Ichabod," expressed the general opinion of surprize and disappointment at Webster's attitude among the anti-slavery men.

In his addresses at the two hundredth anni-

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versary of the landing of the Pilgrims, at the laying of the corner-stone of the Bunker Hill Monument, and at the death of Adams and Jefferson, Webster expounded the ideals of the founders of the American nation. Both for their Americanism and for their eloquence they should be read by every American youth; they are lessons in citizenship. Webster was a master in the older school of oratory. By logical development and the use of striking phrases he gained his effect.

The method of Abraham Lincoln was almost directly opposite to that of the rhetorical orators. His speeches are characterized by a noble simplicity and calmness. He said: "I always assume that my audiences are in many things wiser than I am, and I say the most sensible thing I can to them. I never found that they did not understand me." Lincoln's common sense enabled him to adapt himself perfectly to any situation. His directness, his sympathy and understanding, his keen judgment impressed all who came into contact with him. The *Gettysburg Address* and the *Second Inaugural Address* are classics of American oratory. In a few hundred words Lincoln revealed the spirit of each occasion and inspired his hearers to noble thoughts. His earlier speeches in the courts of Illinois and his debates with Douglas had been his preparation for the presidential addresses. The idea that

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he was a born orator is a most erroneous one. By experience and hard study he acquired his fine literary style.

To many Theodore Roosevelt is the representative orator of twentieth-century America. His numerous interests, his tireless energy, his indomitable will, and his firm determination to accomplish what he believed to be right have exalted him to this position of prominence. His doctrines of the strenuous life and a square deal have gained him many admirers. Roosevelt spoke with definiteness and fearlessness. He always went straight to the point and stated concretely his ideas. The force of his personality and his abundant vitality gave added weight to what he said. The reader will perhaps find his speeches somewhat egotistical, with too much waving of the big stick, but cannot fail to admire his vigor.

At the present day the old-fashioned school of rhetorical oratory has given place to the lecture and informal talk. The speaker presents his views without ornament and often appears to be conversing with his hearers rather than endeavoring to impress them with carefully-planned climaxes. Such speeches seem less artificial and make easier reading, but they seldom rise to the level attained by the great orators of the past.

### XIII

#### FORERUNNERS OF THE NOVEL

THE most popular form of literature is prose narrative. From earliest childhood we are eager to hear a story which will appeal to our imagination or satisfy our curiosity. Cabell once said that "The business of the novelist is to tell untruths that will be diverting." In any case we demand from the novelist that he offer us entertainment, whether he be romanticist or realist. We wish to escape from our actual surroundings or to have their significance interpreted to us through the means of a vivid presentation of the actions of interesting people. The novel gives us an extensive view of life, for we learn about the conditions of society in former times, about places we could never visit, and about persons we might never know. Our most valuable friends may be the creations of some great writer of fiction. They come to be more real to us than the persons with whom we live. A story can be found to appeal to every human emotion. If we are sufficiently imaginative, we may even identify ourselves with the hero or heroine and live vicariously in his experience. Furthermore, in fiction we find incorporated the ideas of the time,

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so that we can reconstruct the society of the age in which the book was written.

In its strictly technical form the novel did not appear until the eighteenth century. There were, however, a long list of forerunners, from the Greek romances of the early centuries of the Christian era to the tales in the eighteenth-century periodicals. These were composed of a succession of episodes more or less loosely connected. The Greek pastoral romance, *Daphnis and Chloe*, is a tale of innocent love among shepherds. Its author, Longus, presents an idealized picture of country life, which never existed in Greece or any other place. It is somewhat conventional, with its lost heirs, separated lovers, miraculous escapes from pirates, and final happy reunion. Longus makes his young people so attractive, however, that we sympathize with them in their difficulties and rejoice with them in their joys, even tho we are highly amused at their simplicity. Longus's work influenced greatly the pastoral romances of the sixteenth century, but it is far more entertaining for the modern reader than those artificial imitations.

Two Latin romances, the *Satyricon* of Petronius and the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, are filled with diverting adventures of a rather coarse nature. They were sources for episodes in the *Decameron*, *Don Quixote*, and *Gil Blas*.

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Petronius shows us the absurd affectation of the newly rich and the dissoluteness of Roman society in the first century of the Empire. The *Golden Ass* relates the experiences of a commercial traveler who was turned into an ass and then owned by representatives of various classes of society. Finally he regained his human form. In this collection of tales the most charming is that of Cupid and Psyche.

The medieval prose romances recount the noble deeds of national heroes, the trials of devoted lovers, or the pious acts of devout Christians. The Irish sagas concerning Cuchulain and Ossian, and the Welsh Mabinogion are fine examples of the first group. The chief characteristics of the Irish sagas are the glorification of the individual hero, the importance of women, and the emphasis placed upon the supernatural. Cuchulain is the Irish Achilles, victorious over all enemies and loved by all women. Many of the tales, such as the *Sorrows of Deirdre*, impress the reader with their pathos, while others abound in typically Irish humor. The authors of the recent Gaelic revival have gone to these ancient legends for their themes and some of their most attractive characters. The Mabinogion tales, taken from the *Red Book of Hergest*, a fourteenth century manuscript, by Lady Charlotte Guest, deal with events during the Celtic



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period, the Roman administration of Britain, and the days of King Arthur.

*Aucassin and Nicolette*, a French romance of the twelfth century, is the story of a slave girl, who turns out to be a daughter of the king of Carthage. She is loved by the heir of Count Garin de Beaucaire, who endeavors to separate the lovers. The story is told partly in verse and partly in prose, a form called *cante-fable*. The beauty of the language and the graceful style entitle this romance to be ranked as the masterpiece of the love romances.

The religious romances were written primarily to teach lessons of service to the church or to relate the miracles of the saints. In *Our Lady's Tumbler* a humble juggler who has entered a monastery serves the Virgin Mary by tumbling before her statue, because that is his only talent. Other stories tell about miraculous escapes and wonderful cures by those who had devoted their lives to the church. A large body of medieval literature concerned the legends of the saints, for religion and especially the worship of the Virgin Mary dominated the life of the time.

With the revival of learning came the imitations of the earlier Greek and Latin romances. These stories were more realistic in subject, coarser in tone, and more artificial in style than the originals. The most celebrated of them

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is Boccaccio's *Decameron*. By nature Boccaccio was a student, but his father wished him to be a merchant. At thirteen he was put to work in a counting-house, later he was apprenticed to a merchant in Naples, and finally he was permitted to study law. But none of these pursuits was congenial to him. He participated in the gay life of the city, and in accordance with the custom of the day fell in love with the wife of the Count d'Aquino. As Fiammetta she was the inspiration for his love poetry and his *Fiammetta*, "the first novel of psychology ever written in Europe." After Fiammetta and his father had been swept away by the Black Death of 1348, Boccaccio was about to enter a monastery when he was dissuaded by Petrarch and encouraged to study the classics. The result of this study was his book concerning famous men and his *Genealogy of the Gods*. In 1373 he started a course of lectures at Florence upon Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but died before he had finished his comments on the "Inferno."

The *Decameron* is composed of one hundred stories supposed to be told by ten persons on ten days while residing at a country villa to escape the plague at Florence. The book opens with a realistic description of the scenes resulting from the terror of the Florentines at the pestilence which was sweeping over the city. The fugitives tell the stories merely to distract their minds.

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Hence the tales are unmoral and frequently rough in their humor. Boccaccio's natural gift for direct narration, good sense of structure, and easy style make his retelling of the material drawn from classical and popular sources unfailingly entertaining. Trickery and exposure of hypocrisy play a great part in furnishing this entertainment. From the pages of the *Decameron* authors of all the European literatures have taken material. Its influence upon English literature from the time of Chaucer has been especially marked.

While Boccaccio was collecting the stories for his *Decameron*, a French physician was composing from the various medieval encyclopedias and travel-books a guide for pilgrims to Jerusalem and merchants to Asia Minor. He claimed to be Sir John Mandeville and to have actually seen all the marvelous things he describes. His *Travels* is largely fiction, but is so well written that the incidents seem plausible. Many of them are ridiculous to the modern reader, but the book is worthy of attention because its great popularity, especially in the English version, indicates the literary taste of the age. Besides the stories, it contains practical advice about roads, stopping-places, and means for determining the value of merchandise offered for sale by the wily Easterners.

In 1485 William Caxton printed another im-

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portant compilation from French sources, so that "noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry." This book was Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, a coherent account of the deeds of the knights of the Round Table. Caxton's characterization of the *Morte d'Arthur* indicates its scope: "For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown." The simple, direct prose of Malory presents Arthur, Lancelot, Gawain, Galahad, Tristan, Guinevere, Elaine, Isolde, and all the minor characters as human beings swayed by their passions and struggling to attain their aims. To Malory are indebted Tennyson, Arnold, Morris, Swinburne, and Robinson for the incidents and characters of some of their finest poetry.

The pastoral romance was brought into European literature in the fifteenth century by the Italian prose-poem *Arcadia* by Sannazarro. The simplicity of the classical pastorals was replaced by artificiality, for in the literature of this period courtiers retired intentionally to the country to amuse themselves. In the pages of Sannazarro they assumed an innocence they did not possess. Sannazarro was imitated by Montemayor in Spain and by Sidney and Lyly in

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England. One of the episodes in Montemayor's *Diana Enamorada* was the source of Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Sir Philip Sidney wrote his *Arcadia* to entertain his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. It is an idealistic pastoral by the first gentleman of the age. Princely shepherds spend their days untroubled by the trials of court and enjoy the pleasures of chivalry and romantic love. The extreme artificiality of the style as well as the elaborateness of the plot bores the modern reader.

This style, based upon carefully constructed sentences, balanced phrases, antitheses, alliteration, puns, and the extravagant use of metaphor and simile, is called Euphuism from the two books, *Euphues* and *Euphues and his England* by John Lyly. One sentence from Lyly's work will illustrate its main characteristics of style: "I have shrined thee in my heart as a trusty friend; I will shun thee henceforth as a trothless foe." The influence of this style upon English prose was minimized by the ridicule of Shakespeare and other great writers, and by the severe censure of the critics. Lyly wrote his pastorals to teach "virtuous and gentle discipline." Like Sidney and Spenser he was trying to restore the passing age of chivalry. His characters lack vitality, for they are too much concerned with the discussions of their emotions and the

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witty expression of their ideas. In *Euphues* the dandies and flappers of the day discourse on the nature of love. At times the reader is reminded of the modern psychoanalytical novel.

No one to-day would have the patience to read extensively these pastoral romances of the Renaissance. They seem hopelessly confused in plot and interminable in length. Yet single episodes in them are entertaining in spite of the faults of style. They are books to be dipped into here and there for an hour's reading. Their chief importance lies in their position in the development of fiction.

Another group of fifteenth and sixteenth century authors burlesqued the romances of chivalry. They were realists attacking the follies of their contemporaries. Two of them, Rabelais and Cervantes, wrote masterpieces in this form of literature. Unlike their predecessors in the art of fiction, they had the ability to create character as well as to tell a good story. The names of their heroes have been incorporated into our language as the adjectives, Gargantuan and Quixotic, to designate persons having similar characteristics.

François Rabelais was educated in a monastery and became a monk and priest. Later he studied medicine and science. He was not content with the life of a monk, but never severed his connection with the church. After some

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years of wandering in France and Italy he spent the last two years of his life as curé of Meudon. His observations on these travels and the results of his wide reading in the literature of the time found expression in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Underlying the humorous and farcical accounts of the adventures of the giant, Gargantua, and his son, some of which were taken from Lucian's *A True Story*, is the lash of Rabelais's venomous satire. Altho his hatred of the hypocrisy and intolerance of the learned professions is concealed under a mass of exaggerated and nonsensical incidents, it is clearly the motive of the work.

Rabelais was an individualist and an optimist. He believed that each person should have the opportunity of self-development without restraint. Furthermore, he was convinced of the natural goodness of man. Even his devils are boon companions and merry fellows. He advocated a life of jollity and freedom. He is often coarse and obscene, but portrays life vigorously and frankly.

The progress of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* is frequently interrupted by digressions, in which Rabelais indulges in subtle irony at the expense of his adversaries. His style rushes along like a torrent, with synonyms falling over one another in groups of three or more. Rabelais's rule seems to have been never to use one word when

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you can just as easily employ several. Even his enormous vocabulary was not sufficient; so he invented words and formed new compounds. Since his characters are giants, perhaps it is appropriate for them to thunder, "Let no other cark nor care be harboured within the sacrosanctified domicile of your celestial brain." Such language, moreover, aids to produce the comic effect which is this author's chief claim to fame.

Six years before the death of Rabelais, was born the Spanish author who was to make the romances of chivalry ridiculous. Cervantes served as a soldier in Italy, was wounded at the battle of Lepanto, and was a prisoner in Algiers for five years. After his return to Spain he held several public offices, but apparently was negligent, for he was imprisoned for shortages in his accounts. Hence these positions did little to increase the meager income he received from his literary work. His unfinished *Galatea* is a pastoral romance of inferior quality, and his score of plays have been forgotten.

In 1605 Cervantes published the first part of *Don Quixote*. At once it became popular and has continued for three hundred years to be the only book of Spanish literature to be universally read. During his imprisonment Cervantes had reread the romances and had noted as never before their extravagance. He tells us that he wrote his



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book "to diminish the authority and importance that books of chivalry have in the world and among the vulgar" and "to expose to the contempt they deserve the extravagant and silly tales of chivalry." His method was burlesque. Don Quixote is an idealist seeking to revive knight-errantry in a realistic and selfish world. He mistakes a windmill for a giant and a country wench for his lady. He is rational upon all subjects except chivalry, but even in his maddest actions he is noble. His gentle disposition and kindly ways have endeared him to all readers. Don Quixote's squire, Sancho Panza, is a materialist, more interested in obtaining his next meal than in aiding distressed maidens. His common sense is contrasted with the Don's romanticism. The Lady Dulcinea is the conventional and haughty beauty of courtly love.

Most critics consider the second part of *Don Quixote*, published in 1615, superior in its human appeal to the first part. The concluding scene of the death of the beloved Don Quixote is a masterpiece of restraint and pathos. The twelve *Exemplary Tales* are further evidence of Cervantes's marvelous invention, universal humor, and remarkable characterization.

The works of Rabelais and Cervantes turned the attention of the reader from adventure for its own sake to an interest in particular characters. The early forerunners of the novel were

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concerned primarily with the telling of the story, while the immediate precursors, following the example of Cervantes, made some effort to depict characters. Madeleine de Scudéry chose historical characters for her *Grand Cyrus* and *Clélie*, interminable romances of some six thousand pages each, but she was really portraying the persons of the court of Louis XIV under a thin disguise. The events in her books reflected those of her own times, and the conversations were typical of French aristocratic society rather than of the ancient world. In the description of "the country of tenderness" she used the device of allegory, a favorite method with seventeenth-century writers.

The most popular allegory in literature is John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Translated into seventy-five languages and dialects, it has been read in every portion of the world. In *Grace Abounding* Bunyan told the story of his sinful days as a poor tinker, of his conversion, of his persistent study of the Bible, of his preaching in the streets of Bedford, and of his imprisonment in Bedford jail for having "devilishly and perniciously abstained from coming to church" and for refusing to discontinue his preaching. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a dream-allegory of the trials and temptations of the Christian as he journeys through the world to the eternal city. It made clear to the common

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people the Puritan doctrine of salvation through grace. Bunyan's detailed descriptions of places and vivid characterization of types, such as Faithful, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and Talkative, have gained him readers who have had no interest in his purpose. His simple, straightforward, and somewhat colloquial style, learned from the King James version of the Bible, is adequately fitted to his subject.

This plain style was also suitable for the realistic narratives of Daniel Defoe, whose training as a journalist enabled him to see in the adventures of Alexander Selkirk on an uninhabited island and in the careers of criminals and prostitutes possibilities for entertaining and profitable stories. *Robinson Crusoe* shows how an ordinary Englishman would act under exceptional circumstances. The tale is made convincing by the use of minute details, so that the reader is never left in doubt as to the why and wherefore of events. This fact accounts for its popularity with young readers. Furthermore, the story exalts the virtues of patience, honesty, and industry as characteristic of the typical Englishman. Defoe was shrewd enough not to overstress the moral, but he knew its appeal to his middle-class audience. *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* deal with low life in London, while the piracies of *Captain Singleton* take us to Africa as Defoe imagined it. *The Memories of a Cavalier* and *A*

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*Journal of a Plague Year* describe historical events as clearly as tho Defoe had participated in them. When one is reading Defoe, it is hard to believe that his works are fiction and not accounts of actual happenings.

Altho Defoe recounted the adventures of criminals, he did not make them heroes. They paid the penalty of hanging or transportation. The French author, Lesage, on the other hand, made a rogue his hero. He obtained the idea of writing *Gil Blas* from the picaresque romances of Spanish literature, which he had studied at the suggestion of his patron, the Abbé de Lyonne. *Gil Blas*'s varied and numerous adventures brought him almost every type of experience among all classes of society. Lesage drew his material largely from life in Paris in the first half of the eighteenth century, for he was a keen observer of his surroundings. He has little time or inclination for reflections, but he does satirize the pompous types of his time by revealing them through the eyes of his clever rogue. The successors of Lesage in the realm of realistic fiction were Smollett, who translated *Gil Blas* into English, and Fielding.

Besides the books discussed in this chapter there were many other narratives which prepared the way for the novel, but they are interesting only to the specialist in literature. They are all similar in nature in so far as they are

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composed of rambling adventures. Until the middle of the eighteenth century no writer of fiction produced a book with a central idea, a coherent progression of plot, and a definite conclusion. This was the accomplishment of Samuel Richardson, the father of the modern novel.

## XIV

### THE ENGLISH NOVEL

ABOUT the year 1740 Samuel Richardson was asked to write a manual of model letters for those unaccustomed to writing familiar correspondence. As he was preparing this work, it occurred to him to connect the letters about a central theme. So was born the English novel. From his boyhood days Richardson had written and read love-letters for servant-girls. Furthermore, he was fonder of the society of the ladies of his own middle class than he was of that of his business associates. Thus this successful and elderly printer had learned the secrets of the feminine heart. He had the remarkable ability of looking at life through the eyes of his sentimental heroines, so that he appears to have entered into their very souls, understanding their thoughts and experiencing their emotions.

His first novel, *Pamela*, is the story of a virtuous serving-maid, who resists the advances of her employer and is rewarded by marriage to him. The letters become boring because they deal with various aspects of the same subject—the trials of a servant-girl. The character of Pamela is, however, finely drawn, even tho she is somewhat too sentimentally good. The success of

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*Pamela* caused Richardson to write another series of letters about the betrayal of a woman of the middle class by a licentious youth. *Clarissa*, like its predecessor, is a sentimental novel, but its heroine is a real woman, whose sorrows impress us. In this novel Richardson sustained the interest, in spite of the book's astounding length, by his dramatic climaxes. In his third novel, *Sir Charles Grandison*, he endeavored to portray the perfect gentleman as a model of virtue and manners for his middle-class readers. As he knew neither the aristocratic class nor the elements of masculine psychology, the work was a failure.

Richardson's moralizing, his sentimentalism, his limited view of life, and his interminability do much to obscure the excellence of his character drawing; nevertheless, his novels did appeal to the taste of his age, so that on the Continent he was ranked with Shakespeare. The influence of *Clarissa* upon the sentimental novel of France and Germany was enormous.

When Henry Fielding read *Pamela*, he was highly amused, for his experience as playwright and justice of the peace had taught him that virtue was seldom rewarded in real life. He wrote *Joseph Andrews* to ridicule the manner and method of Richardson. Joseph, the virtuous brother of Pamela, is dismissed by his mistress, Lady Booby, because he fled from her atten-

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tions. Joseph's subsequent adventures in the company of Parson Adams are so vividly and humorously told that they have overshadowed the original intention of burlesque.

In *Tom Jones* Fielding portrays the life of an ordinary young man who yields to temptations but proves himself true and generous at heart. Altho Tom is weak, he is never mean or proud. The heroine, Sophia, is a true woman and not a sentimental saint. She forgives Tom, since she realizes that he is thoughtless rather than vicious. The novel is a masterpiece in the construction of the plot. Fielding has here woven together three great plots of literature: the missing heir, the separated lovers, and the prodigal son. The reader of *Tom Jones* and of *Amelia* will find a comprehensive picture of eighteenth-century society in England. Fielding's gentle satire and wise comments on social life remind us of his Victorian successor, Thackeray, who wrote: "Since the author of *Tom Jones* was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a man." Fielding is a great realist with an understanding of human nature and an unsurpassed sense of humor.

Fielding's humor is subtle and ironic, while that of his contemporary, Tobias Smollett, is rough and coarse. Smollett had served as a surgeon in the navy during the siege of Carthage



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and had seen the terrible conditions and brutalities of a sailor's life. These experiences he utilized for *Roderick Random* and *Peregrine Pickle*, novels of events rather than of character. His heroes are rogues, whose coarseness disgusts the modern reader. Like Zola, he is an apostle of ugliness and a disciple of naturalism. His own misfortunes had caused him to believe that "we are all playthings of fortune." *Humphrey Clinker*, the story of a journey made by a Welsh family through England and Scotland, is somewhat less harsh. Unlike Fielding, Smollett was indifferent to plot. His novels remind one of the adventure stories of Defoe, for he was interested in events for their own sake. His tendency to present unusual characters and to indulge in slapstick humor influenced Dickens to some extent. Smollett's service to English fiction was the introduction of the element of travel. He is the father of the sea novel and of the dialect novel.

A reaction to the realism of Fielding and the naturalism of Smollett is the sentimentalism of Lawrence Sterne. When the hero of *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* was arrested because he lacked a passport, he called for a volume of *Hamlet* and identified himself as Yorick, the king's jester.

Indeed, the author was a "fellow of infinite jest." His wit and brilliancy caused him to be in demand at every fashionable party in London.

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After the publication of the first part of *Tristram Shandy* he had engagements months in advance. Sterne's books are a jumble of more or less unrelated incidents about the Shandy family and the fictitious tour of Europe. He was a past-master in the art of suggestion, leaving the outcome of his unfinished episodes to the reader's imagination. He enjoyed fooling the reader by skipping a chapter or omitting the essential fact of an incident. Underlying his fooling is a little mild satire of human frailties and a touching pathos. Sterne was a poseur concerned with his own impulsive reactions and sensibility. His philosophy was one of pleasure and flirtation. He has left us a gallery of inimitable portraits, among which are such diversified characters as My Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, La Fleur, and the Parisian Grisset.

Another book published in the spirit of jest was the *Castle of Otranto*, which Horace Walpole pretended was an ancient story he had discovered. It is a typical Gothic romance, with its underground passages, wild storms, pursued heroine, mysterious happenings, and narrow escapes. Walpole most effectively accomplished his purpose of surprizing his readers and terrifying them. Of the many successors of the *Castle of Otranto*, Mrs. Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, containing all the paraphernalia of

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the terror novel, is the most hair-raising. In the Gothic romance is the germ of the mystery novel.

Even Dr. Johnson contributed to the list of eighteenth-century novels. *Rasselas* is a philosophical romance about the escape of a prince and his sister from the Happy Valley to the outer world under the guidance of the philosopher Imlac in their search for happiness. Johnson attacks the current optimism with the conclusion that "human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed." *Rasselas* is dull because of its moral teachings and learned discussions between the prince and the philosopher.

To save its author from a debtor's prison, Dr. Johnson sold for sixty pounds a book whose popularity exceeds not only that of his own *Rasselas* but also that of any other eighteenth-century novel. This book was Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a story of the simple family life of a country clergyman. Dr. Primrose "is drawn as ready to teach and ready to obey; as simple in affluence, and majestic in adversity." The inherent goodness and faith of the father and the pathos of the story appealed to all readers throughout Europe. Goethe commended Goldsmith for his sympathetic understanding of human nature and recommended *The Vicar of Wakefield* as one of the best novels ever written.

A country parsonage, similar in some respects

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to Dr. Primrose's cottage, was the home of Jane Austen. She wrote for her own amusement about the ordinary life of the people she knew, and cared little whether her works were published or not. Consequently her books were not well known until after her death. Five of her six novels, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Persuasion*, *Mansfield Park*, and *Emma*, deal with the customs and daily duties of households typical of hundreds in the England of the early nineteenth century. Jane Austen ridiculed the sensationalism and the extravagance of the Gothic romance, which she satirized in *Northanger Abbey*. Her careful workmanship made her novels perfect of their kind. With her contemporary, Sir Walter Scott, who recognized her ability, we may exclaim, "What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!"

In 1814 Scott published *Waverley*, the first of his historical romances known as the Waverley novels. Altho Scott manipulated historical details to serve his purpose of dramatic presentation, most boys have gained a clearer idea of the Crusades, Medieval France, Elizabethan England, and the Scotland of the Stuart pretenders from *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman*, *Quentin Durward*, *Kenilworth*, *The Heart of Midlothian*, and *The Bride of Lammermoor*, than from any course in history. Scott recreated the spirit of the past. The atmosphere and the set-

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ting of his novels are integral parts of their plots, for the background harmonizes with the action and intensifies it. Scott's most appealing characters are those of his novels of Scotch life. His lords and ladies are too haughty and too cold to be attractive. We enjoy his historical novels for their vast scenes of thrilling action, but turn to his Scotch novels for a delineation of life and real persons like Jeanie Deans.

The popularity of Scott among the English novelists has been surpassed only by that of Charles Dickens. This popularity is due to his farcical humor, his striking exaggerations, his detailed descriptions, his melodramatic scenes, and especially his queer but vivid characters. Dickens's method of character-drawing was to exaggerate some dominant trait until the character became a caricature. Sam Weller, Micawber, Pickwick, Uriah Heep, Bill Sykes, Pecksniff, Oliver Twist, Little Nell, Squeers, and numerous others became as well known to the Victorians as their next-door neighbors. If the readers of twentieth-century America have not made the acquaintance of these people, they have missed one of the lasting joys of literature.

Dickens wrote his novels to arouse the British public to a sense of the dreadful conditions among the poor. In the preface to *Martin Chuzzlewit* he stated his purpose thus: "In all my writings I hope I have taken every possible

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opportunity of showing the want of sanitary improvements in the neglected dwellings of the poor." From his own experience he knew the hardships of the poor. When he was eleven years old, he was pasting labels on blacking-bottles and associating with the downtrodden of the London slums. Later he gained further knowledge of vice and brutality as a clerk in a lawyer's office and as a newspaper reporter. Until the publication of *Pickwick Papers* in 1836, his life was a struggle against poverty. *David Copperfield*, considered generally his masterpiece, is based upon these early sufferings and the peculiarities of Dickens's father, who was the original for Micawber.

Altho' the majority of the novels of Dickens expose social abuses, one, *A Tale of Two Cities*, enunciates his faith in the natural goodness of man. Sydney Carton sacrifices his life so that Lucie Manette, whom he hopelessly loves, may find happiness with Charles Darnay. This is the most carefully constructed of Dickens's works. The descriptions of the French Revolution are better than the descriptions in some of the other novels because the details do not obscure the general picture. No reader will ever forget Madame Defarge knitting at the door of her wine-shop.

The chief faults of Dickens are his sentimentality and his melodramatic tendencies. His

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villains are very black, and his heroines are paragons of goodness and sweetness. So tense are his scenes that his followers could hardly wait for the next part of one of his absorbing stories. Dickens is a novelist of the heart, appealing to the deepest emotions of humanity, and as long as men and women are swayed by their emotions, he will be read. According to the testimony of booksellers and librarians, *David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Oliver Twist*, and *A Tale of Two Cities* are still called for more than any other novels of their time. The sympathy of Dickens for suffering humanity and his understanding of human nature have kept his fame alive. Even should his novels come in time to be forgotten, his Christmas stories will still have admirers.

Thackeray, on the other hand, appeals to the intellect rather than to the heart. As a realist and critic of society he is a literary descendant of Fielding. He hated the affectation and hypocrisy of aristocratic life as he had observed it. A sentence from a letter to his mother reveals his aim in writing his best-known novel, *Vanity Fair*: "What I want is to make a set of people living without God in the world—greedy, pompous men, perfectly self-satisfied for the most part, and at ease about their superior virtue." The heroine of this society is the unscrupulous adventuress, Becky Sharp. The heroes are

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Arthur Pendennis and Clive Newcome in *Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*. Thackeray's attitude is that of a moralist, availing himself of every opportunity to emphasize the lesson of his stories by discussing with his readers in a conversational tone the significance of the actions of his characters.

Thackeray's extensive knowledge of the eighteenth century served him in writing *Henry Esmond* and its sequel, *The Virginians*. The people of these historical novels were just as real to him as those of Victorian society. He became so interested in the characters he created that he is said to have wept after he finished describing the death of Colonel Newcome. For its restraint and true feeling this description is one of the great scenes of literature. Another scene even more indicative of his command of situation is the discovery of Lord Steyne in Becky's apartment by her husband, Rawdon Crawley. In depicting such scenes Thackeray is unsurpassed.

A follower of Thackeray is Anthony Trollope, who chronicled the doings of society in a cathedral town of mid-Victorian England. He was the most indefatigable of workers, writing two or three novels at the same time. The result was some eighty novels, of which *The Warden*, *Framley Parsonage*, *Barchester Towers*, and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* still give pleasure by their accurate pictures of a quiet English town.



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Trollope had no illusions concerning the merit of his work. He made no claim to the title of artist, but regarded himself only as a conscientious workman, portraying a variety of characters in a limited world; a world, however, in which the struggles and jealousies, tho trivial, were as potent as in the London of Thackeray.

Charlotte Brontë also was a realist of the school of Thackeray with a tendency toward romanticism. She and her sister Emily sought in the writing of fiction relief from the routine and dulness of their teaching. What they could not experience they would imagine. Emily's *Wuthering Heights* is a stormy romance of tortured souls; Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* shows the faithful devotion of a humble governess. The atmosphere of both novels is grim and suggestive of the Gothic romance.

The biographer of Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, wrote in *Cranford* a delightful story of village life. The gossip and flutter of feminine society about trifles she has humorously reproduced. Her novels of social reform based upon the lives of the poor in the industrial city of Manchester have lost the appeal they once had.

The supreme moralist among the Victorian novelists is Mary Ann Evans, who wrote under the name of George Eliot. A psychological analysis of individuals struggling with the prob-

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lems of life is the chief characteristic of her work. Her characters develop according to their surroundings and inherent traits. If they transgress the moral law, they inevitably pay the penalty for their actions. If they do a deed of unselfishness, their lives become brighter and their characters stronger. As suffering played a large part in lives of the country folk, who were the subjects of George Eliot's novels, there is usually a note of sadness in her work. At times the tragedy, as in the story of Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, is very depressing. The theme of the degeneration of one group of characters contrasted with the regeneration of another group occurs again and again. *Silas Marner*, *Adam Bede*, and *Romola* teach the same lesson with a change in the problems and the setting. Probably that is the reason George Eliot is read less than any other Victorian novelist. She is too typically Victorian in her moralizing. Even her fine characterization is subordinated to her desire to convey a lesson.

George Meredith also was a psychologist, but he was concerned with types rather than with individuals. His women are emancipated, for he scorned the sentimental heroine. He suggests that the ideal marriage is one in which the husband and wife are intellectual companions. His analysis of the thought of man reveals that most of us are egoists. In fact, his greatest

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novel is entitled *The Egoist*. Like George Eliot, he strikes a note of tragedy. Both *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *Beauchamp's Career* have a sad conclusion. Meredith's condensed style and philosophical tendency have limited his audience, because the average reader finds him difficult to follow.

Altho Thomas Hardy's style is simpler than Meredith's, his novels have a scarcely wider appeal. Hardy is a pessimist, placing his characters in the grip of a relentless fate. They are victims of an environment like Egdon Heath in *The Return of the Native*. Nature is hostile, and man is unkind. When *Far from the Madding Crowd* was published anonymously in the *Cornhill Magazine*, many readers thought that George Eliot must be the author, because of the tragic tone. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* contain the fullest expression of Hardy's pessimistic philosophy. Altho he lived until 1928, he stopped writing novels at the beginning of the twentieth century.

While the majority of Victorian novelists were discussing the problems of life and subjecting society to an intensive analysis with the purpose of social reform, Robert Louis Stevenson was writing glorious romances of stirring adventures merely to entertain. *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* have thrilled men as well as boys with their narrow escapes and rapid action. As I

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write, Long John Silver and Jim Hawkins are being presented to the radio audience in a program of retold tales. For Stevenson the story is the essential part of the novel, even in a psychological study like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. No one since Scott has drawn such excellent pictures of Scotch life as those in *The Master of Ballantrae* and *David Balfour*.

Several minor Victorian novelists have been remembered for one or two books. Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia* and *Westward Ho!*; Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *Harold*; and Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* are historical novels dealing respectively with the conflict between paganism and Christianity in Alexandria, Elizabethan voyages of discovery, the licentious society of the Roman Empire, the Norman conquest, and the spirit of the early Renaissance. Richard Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* owes its reputation to its romantic episodes and its unexcelled descriptions of the scenery of the Exmoor section of England. The Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, wrote a number of political novels from his experiences with party government. *Coningsby* is perhaps more readable than the others.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century a native of Poland, Captain Korzeniowski, was beginning to write—in English—novels based upon his cruises as a sea captain. Joseph

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Conrad was his pen-name, and his object was to make his readers see "life on the ocean wave" as he had observed it. He interpreted the effect of the sea, and of strange, out-of-the-way places, upon the moods of men and women. His women are somewhat unnatural, because they are undemonstrative, suffering in silence. His men, however, are virile and impressive in their conflicts with their environments and fellow men.

Of *The Nigger of the Narcissus* Conrad wrote: "It is the book by which, not as a novelist, perhaps, but as an artist striving for the utmost sincerity of expression, I am willing to stand or fall." For the majority of his readers, *Lord Jim* or *Victory* surpasses *The Nigger* in story-power and in characterization. All his novels bear witness to his care in composition. Every word counts, for he endeavored to gain "a perfect blending of form and substance." His novels are a unique combination of romanticism and realism. He transports his reader to an unfrequented portion of the world and makes him at home there.

Of living English novelists, particularly those under forty, it is difficult to write, as they are still making their reputations. They are experimenting with new forms of fiction and dealing with rather startling subjects under the influence of modern psychology. At present there seems to be a tendency to overdo the psycho-

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analytic method. In a recent novel the hero spends most of his thought on an introspective investigation of the workings of his mind and emotions. The novel of plot and the novel of character development have yielded to the novel of the laboratory.

Some of our contemporary novelists, however, are carrying on the older tradition, altho they try at times new forms. H. G. Wells uses the novel to present his theories and ideas of what the world might be if nations would forget their selfish aims and pool their resources for the benefit of mankind. By temperament and training Wells is a scientist investigating the social, political, and religious life of our time in an endeavor to discover ways of improving conditions. He is ever advocating change for what he considers the better. His novels fall into several groups. The imaginative romances picture the world of the future as a mechanical world. The most ambitious of these, according to Wells, is *The Sleeper Awakes*. The sociological novels criticize contemporary stupidity. *Tono Bungay*, *The History of Mr. Polly*, and *The New Machiavelli* are typical of this group and are considered by some critics Wells's best work. His more recent works may be classed as novels of ideas. *The World of William Clissold* is the most comprehensive of these, as it contains discussions on all the modern theories. Besides

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the novels, Wells has written several books explaining his views. The essence of his scheme is stated in *The Open Conspiracy*, published in 1928. Some years ago Anatole France called Wells "the greatest intellectual force in the English-speaking world."

While Wells is preaching the gospel of change, Arnold Bennett is showing the effect of changing conditions upon people. His novels of the potteries district of England are studies of provincial life in a changing environment. *The Old Wives' Tale* is one of the three great English novels of the twentieth century. The other two are Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga* and Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*. Even in his most superficial books, such as *Lillian*, Bennett is interested in the influence of surroundings upon character. Many critics feel that he has wasted his talents in writing merely entertaining novels, when he had nothing particular to say. But one should not expect an *Old Wives' Tale* every year. In whatever he writes, serious or flippant, Bennett is essentially a realist and always entertaining.

The literary descendant of Thackeray in contemporary fiction is John Galsworthy. As Thackeray satirized the upper middle class of Victorian society, so Galsworthy points out the faults of the same class to-day. Soames Forsyte, the central character of the *Forsyte Saga*, is an embodiment of the sense of possession and the

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sense of family solidarity. He fails to realize that he cannot buy whatever he wants. Through his obtuseness he loses the woman he loves and does not understand the attitude of people whose ideas are different from his own. Galsworthy is coldly intellectual, writing with restraint and precision. He presents problems from the point of view of a spectator of the modern scene, but offers no solutions to them.

Somerset Maugham is also a careful workman. He produced only four novels in seventeen years, but three of these, *Of Human Bondage*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, and *The Painted Veil*, are works of high merit. They are studies of the sensitive and selfish temperament. Maugham is harsh and stern, scorning especially the parasitic type of woman. He is cruel to his characters, even tho he sympathizes with them in their sufferings. His statement that "the writer is more concerned to know than to judge" suggests his theory of his craft.

Another novelist who has expressed his views on the art of fiction is Hugh Walpole. In a lecture given in 1925 he stated his creed: "I believe that in the novel there must be first creation of character and secondly a narrative interest." He might have added that the narrative interest results from conflicts of ideas. In most of his novels the characters struggle against some impending obstacle. In *Fortitude* the obstacle is



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heredity; in *The Duchess of Wrex* and *Winterson*, the social traditions; in *The Green Mirror*, the jealousy of a mother; in *The Captives*, religious prejudice. The aspect of contemporary life which impresses Walpole is the clash between Victorian emotions and modern ideas. His ability to describe situations with an appropriate phrase makes his contrasts most striking.

The experimental school of modern fiction does not endorse Walpole's creed. These writers subordinate creation of character and narrative interest to a dissection of mental states. Their characters spend more time in introspection than in action. George Moore, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and some dozen others have startled and often confused unsuspecting readers. The attitude of many toward this school is that of a youth who asked after reading a typical specimen, "What is it all about?"

## XV

### THE AMERICAN NOVEL

DURING the revolutionary period several writers imitated the English novels of the eighteenth century, but the first original American novelist was James Fenimore Cooper. He became a novelist by chance, for he wrote his first book to prove a remark to his wife that he could write a better novel than one he was reading. The result scarcely justified his contention. In 1821, however, he succeeded with *The Spy*, a story of Washington's retreat from New York through Westchester.

Cooper had spent his boyhood in central New York, which was then still a wilderness inhabited by Indians and pioneers. In the *Leather-Stocking Tales*, composed of *The Deerslayer*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Pathfinder*, *The Pioneers*, and *The Prairie*, he caught the mystery of the forest as no other writer ever has. Many boys have followed with breathless interest the adventures of Natty Bumppo and have learned to admire the hardy pioneers. Their knowledge of Indians is also largely derived from the *Leather-Stocking Tales*.

Cooper also knew the sea, since he had been nine years in the navy after his expulsion from

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Yale. His sea stories, beginning with *The Pilot*, have been praised for their "consummate understanding" by no less an authority than Joseph Conrad. The descriptions of fights on the sea, of wrecks, and of storms have seldom been equaled.

Cooper's style reflects his impulsive and quarrelsome nature. He was careless and indifferent to the laws of composition. He wrote as the words came to him, with no thought of revision. The majority of his characters are wooden or too noble, especially his weak and silly women. He had no sense of humor and took himself too seriously, suing his detractors. Yet in spite of all his faults he was a great storyteller, who will be read as long as forest and sea call to American boyhood.

Altho Cooper at times was given to moralizing, he concerned himself little with the religious life of the American settlers. The annalist of Puritanism is Nathaniel Hawthorne. His home was Salem, famous for its trials of witches and its stern morality. This atmosphere is the background for *The Scarlet Letter*, "the finest piece of imaginative writing yet put forth in America," according to Henry James. The theme of this novel is that the sinner cannot escape the effect of sin upon the soul, no matter what atonement he may make. As the scarlet letter embroidered upon Hester Prynne's dress when she stands on the scaffold is the symbol of her

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sin, so little Pearl in the cottage on the outskirts of the town is a continual reminder of her fall. The grim pathos of Hester's story insured for the novel a success surprising both to Hawthorne and to his publishers, who thought it too tragic for a general appeal.

*The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Marble Faun* are also studies of disturbed conscience. The scene of the first is a haunted house in Salem, frequented by ghosts under the spell of a curse. *The Marble Faun* was suggested to Hawthorne during a residence of two years in Italy. As a setting for this story dealing with the effect of a crime upon different types of characters, Hawthorne described historic places and commented upon Italian sculpture. It is significant, however, that the most striking character of the book is the Puritan, Hilda. Hawthorne had discovered the romance in New England Puritanism and never departed far from its influence, regardless of the setting of his novels.

The novel which aroused the moral indignation of the North to the abuses of slavery was also a product of New England. Mrs. Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a piece of propaganda for the *National Era*, an anti-slavery periodical. It is highly sentimental and melodramatic, but it has touched the emotions of millions through the stage version and the recent moving picture. Mrs. Stowe's novels of New

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England life have long been forgotten. The world knows her only as the creator of little Eva, Topsy, Eliza, and Uncle Tom.

Of the large number of American novelists writing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens), William Dean Howells, and Henry James alone have a permanent place in world literature. Mark Twain's understanding of the various phases of American character and his wide knowledge of other nationalities, gained from his extensive travels, fitted him to be the interpreter of American life. He was an individualist, disregarding conventions. No one ever knew what he might do or say. His spirit of fun was so infectious that his audiences tried to find humor even in his serious novels, such as *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Joan of Arc*.

Mark Twain's humor is typically American. It consists in exaggerating a fault or in unduly emphasizing an unimportant detail. He realized, however, that the truest humor is based on discriminating observation and serious reflection. Thus underneath his most extravagant fooling is a touch of satire at current stupidity. He could be as indignant and as bitter as Swift when he was aroused. He also had a wonderful vocabulary of invectives acquired during his days on the Mississippi River steamboats. Mrs.

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Clemens frequently exerted a restraining influence, if we may believe Mark's stories.

He learned to write in newspaper offices in Nevada and California. *Innocents Abroad*, his first book, is composed of his letters to his paper during his first trip through Europe. *A Tramp Abroad* and *Following the Equator* are records of other trips. All these books prove that he was a shrewd traveler, missing little of the characteristic life of the places he visited.

Upon the experiences of his youth Mark Twain drew for *Roughing It*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and his stories of American boyhood in the seventies, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. These books are more than accounts of humorous adventures; they are records of the development of civilization in the central portion of the United States during the decades after the Civil War. Mark Twain is the chronicler and incidentally the satirist of American democracy.

The extent of his popularity is best illustrated by one of the famous anecdotes about him. One evening at a Players' Club dinner Brander Matthews suddenly remembered that it was Mark Twain's birthday. With several other diners he composed a letter of congratulation. When they came to address the envelop, no one could tell just where Mark was at that moment. So they sent the letter to "Mark Twain, God knows where." Some weeks later Professor

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Her most artistic book is *Ethan Frome*, the finest study of New England character since Hawthorne.

Dorothy Canfield has also presented the problems of the modern woman. Her women, however, do not belong to the aristocratic class, but to the hard-working middle class. *The Brimming Cup*, *The Home-Maker*, and *Her Son's Wife* deal with women who have solved their problems and accepted their responsibilities.

The West is represented in contemporary fiction by Booth Tarkington, Theodore Dreiser, Willa Cather, and a number of younger writers. Tarkington once said: "I had no real success until I struck Indiana subjects." The first of the Indiana series was *The Gentleman from Indiana*, a romantic story of a young man who found success by working hard at home after he had sought it in a wider environment. Tarkington wrote about the same time a charming romance of the eighteenth century, *Monsieur Beaucaire*. The books of his later period are more realistic but are never sordid. He has always had the optimism of the romantic temperament. His portraits of boyhood and youth in *The Flirt*, *Penrod*, and *Seventeen* have recalled to many the experiences of their earlier days. These young people take themselves so very seriously that trivial mishaps seem to them irreparable tragedies. Even when we sympathize with them, as

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we do in reading *Alice Adams*, we cannot help but see the humorous side of their difficulties. *The Turmoil*, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, and *The Midlander* show the changes which material progress is bringing to the Middle West. In these books, as well as in *The World Does Move*, Tarkington suggests a contrast between the peaceful nineties and the Jazz Age, indicating that progress destroys idealism and brings ugliness. Altho Tarkington is often superficial, he is always entertaining in his portrayal of the lighter side of American life.

Theodore Dreiser, on the other hand, finds little in modern America to cause him to smile. The title of his best-known book, *An American Tragedy*, indicates his point of view. From his observations as a collector for an instalment house and as a newspaper man, he has formed the philosophy that "life was intended to sting and hurt." The whole of existence seems aimless to him. Yet he continually wonders at the strange and unexpected coincidences. His first novel, *Sister Carrie*, is his best work—probably because a friend cut out some 40,000 words. Dreiser cannot resist the tendency to multiply irrelevant details. He leaves nothing to the imagination of his readers. The publishers accepted *Sister Carrie* in 1900 with some misgiving, as the heroine does not suffer for her misdoing but becomes a success upon the stage. Dreiser's strong



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point is the drawing of characters whose lives are dominated by the struggle of conflicting desires. The desire for power in the business world is the subject of *The Financier* and *The Titan*. In *An American Tragedy* Dreiser thoroughly investigates the circumstances which produced a murderer out of a sensitive and lonely youth and brings an indictment against the processes of our legal system. This novel is too long, and far from pleasant, but makes a profound impression, for Dreiser is sincere in his study of the problems of twentieth-century America.

Willa Cather is more concerned with the past than with the present. Her novels contain recollections of her childhood and youth spent in Nebraska, where she was a neighbor of Norwegian and Bohemian immigrants. She has recorded the efforts and aims of these pioneers of the West in such novels as *The Song of the Lark* and *My Antonia*. Another section of the West which has attracted her is that once occupied by the cliff-dwellers. The excellent descriptions of this section, incorporated in *The Professor's House* and *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, have greatly increased Miss Cather's reputation as an artist. The simplicity and beauty of her style and her sympathetic understanding of the artistic and scholarly temperaments have assured her a place in the first rank of our novelists.

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The American novelist of to-day who has given the most careful attention to style is a romanticist from Virginia. Finding modern America entirely inadequate, James Branch Cabell has created Poictesme, an imaginary country of medieval times. In this remarkable land Manuel, the Redeemer; Jurgen, the Pawnbroker; and numerous ladies of surpassing beauty discover that the romantic ideals of youth are illusions. Cabell has told us that his purpose is "to write perfectly of beautiful happenings." Life is a series of comedies to be accepted "with a smile of toleration." By means of a mixture of mythology, allegory, irony, and wit he expounds his theories in an entertaining manner. Before *Jurgen* was censored, Cabell's name was practically unknown to the average reader. His audience is still a comparatively small one, because the average reader cares more for the story than for the style of a novel. Cabell's mystifications and elaborate phraseology irritate many readers. *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck*, a story of Southern aristocracy, is an excellent introduction to Cabell, as it is less fantastic.

A neighbor of Cabell, who has treated the society of the South from a realistic point of view, is Ellen Glasgow. Her penetrating studies of the new South, especially *The Romantic Comedians* and *They Stooped to Folly*, have aroused the antagonism of the adherents of

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Southern chivalry. Miss Glasgow has no illusions about the South. She has watched the changes about her old home in Richmond and has interpreted their influences. The leisure of the plantation has yielded to bustle of business. Those who have refused to recognize the change and have clung to the old traditions are deluding themselves.

The novelists discussed in the preceding pages have been chosen as representative of contemporary American fiction because their best work has qualities of permanence. Others, like Sinclair Lewis, have written best sellers but have placed too much emphasis on a passing phase of American life or have tried too hard to appeal to the popular taste. They have definitely written for an audience demanding a certain type of fiction from them. Some have been directly accused of considering their pockets rather than their art. At any rate the American novel is assuming an individuality and has a bright outlook. The Pulitzer Prize, the publishers' prizes, and the book clubs offer encouragement to young writers to produce characteristically American novels. Whether the awards have gone to distinguished work is for posterity to decide. Undoubtedly many popular novels will be forgotten fifty years hence, while a comparatively unknown book may be held to be most expressive of the spirit of the age.

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# OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

## PART II

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THE  
WORLD'S ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE  
VOLUME IV

OUTLINE OF LITERATURE  
PART II

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## PART II

### XVI

#### THE FRENCH NOVEL

TEN years before the publication of Richardson's *Pamela*, l'Abbé Prévost had written his pathetic story of the love of Manon Lescaut for the Chevalier des Grieux. If the plot of *Manon Lescaut* were a little more closely constructed, Prévost might be considered the father of the modern novel rather than Richardson. The simplicity, charm, and devotion of Manon have won the admiration of many famous novelists and critics and have still an appeal after two centuries through the operas of Massenet and Puccini. Prévost also translated into French the novels of Richardson, which received an even more enthusiastic reception on the Continent than in England.

The philosophic tale was almost as popular in France as the sentimental romance. Voltaire used this form to ridicule the superstitions and fallacies of his day. Most of his tales have an Oriental setting, because Voltaire had

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learned the danger of being too outspoken. In his youth he had been twice imprisoned in the Bastille, and during his whole life he was forced to live in exile for long periods. His mockery, his wit, and his rapid prose style reached their highest point in *Candide*, an account of the misfortunes befalling Candide from his capture by the Bulgarians to his decision to settle upon a farm in Turkey. Voltaire wrote this story to attack the current theory that "all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds." The advocate of this optimistic philosophy is Pangloss, a professor of metaphysico-theologico-cosmolo-nigology. When he tries to prove to Candide at the end of the story that all his misfortunes were for the best, Candide dismisses the subject with the remark, "All that is very well, but let us cultivate our garden."

Voltaire fought for intellectual freedom and the right of the individual to express his own ideas. Besides the tales, he wrote poetry, tragedies, comedies, histories, criticism, and philosophy—in all nearly one hundred volumes—but his literary reputation rests upon the clever satires, *Candide* and *Zadig*.

The freedom which was defended so ardently by the eighteenth-century philosophers was the theme of the novels of Henri Beyle, who wrote under the name of Stendhal. He realized that his subjective attitude and his psychological

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method would be appreciated better by posterity than by his contemporaries, for he said, "I shall be understood about 1880." Another date he set was 1935. The present revival of interest in *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, and the *Vie d'Henri Brulard* justifies his prophecy. He is distinctly modern in his analysis of motives for actions and in his endeavor "to tell truthfully and clearly what takes place in my heart."

For the scope of his work and the variety of his characters, taken from all stations in life, Honoré de Balzac is the most remarkable of the French novelists who wrote in the nineteenth century. The novels portraying Parisians, peasants, and provincials he called as a whole *The Human Comedy*. Altho he analyzed the motives of persons from all classes, he was at his best in his studies of greed and selfishness. As he wandered about the streets and suburbs of Paris or walked along country roads during his visits to the provinces, he stored his memory with incidents to be used later. From his early years he had confidence in his ability to write and was not discouraged by failure or hardships. Adverse criticism seemed to spur him to renewed efforts in another direction. At last he found his field in the creation of the types of the human comedy. The creative impulse was so strong in him that he worked at a feverish pace,

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producing novels at the rate of four a year. He was not, however, a careless worker, for he even made revisions on the proof-sheets in his endeavor to perfect his style.

Always in need of money, Balzac entered upon several business ventures, which brought him nothing but more debts. When he was most successful as a novelist, he never made enough money to satisfy his extravagant tastes. He craved publicity and sought it in the most expensive society. He was seldom free from an entangling love affair. All these experiences in the business and social world gave him material for the vast amount of realistic detail in his novels. Not only did he have an understanding of people of all ages and all sorts, but he also had a sense of background as keen as that of Scott. *Eugénie Grandet*, *Père Goriot*, and *Seraphita* are perhaps the most characteristic examples of Balzac's method and style. It is to be regretted that he did not live to carry out his plan to make a complete analysis of human character.

Outside of France, Victor Hugo has been more widely read than Balzac, altho he is not such a powerful writer. For almost half a century he was the leader of the romantic school. During the Second Empire he was banished for his political views and went to live in Guernsey and later in Brussels. This exile increased his fame, because

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it made him a martyr in the eyes of his followers. It is more important, however, in its influence upon his novels. During this period Hugo came to know the sufferings and sacrifices of the poor, who were his neighbors. He sympathized with them and admired them for their willingness to help each other in times of trouble.

He wrote his novels to call attention to the social conditions which were producing criminals and to the inhuman treatment which was destroying every vestige of humanity in the condemned. *Les Misérables* pictures in a series of dramatic scenes the lives of the unfortunate and wretched. The career of Jean Valjean, pursued relentlessly by the police because he was once convicted of a minor crime, forms the central theme of this comprehensive novel. Hugo stated in one sentence the theory upon which he developed the character of Jean Valjean: "Is there not in every human soul a primitive spark, a divine element incorruptible in this world, immortal in the next, which can be developed by good, kindled, lit up, and made resplendently radiant, and which evil can never entirely extinguish?"

Some incidents in *Notre Dame de Paris* and the *Toilers of the Sea* are even more melodramatic than those in *Les Misérables*. Whoever has seen the motion picture, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, will never forget the fiendish activ-



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ity of Quasimodo. In spite of his unevenness and extravagance, Hugo has given us magnificent historical scenes reflecting the attitude of the times. His chief faults are his lack of humor and his lack of a sense of proportion. His novels are filled with digressions and improbabilities, but they seldom bore the reader, who feels that he is witnessing the action so vividly described.

Alexandre Dumas treated history with even more freedom in his romances about brave soldiers and fair ladies. The result, however, has gratified every lover of the story of adventure, regardless of the remarks made by critics concerning his methods of composition. For Dumas the production of books was a most successful occupation financially. He sketched the plots, employed assistants to do the actual writing, and then revised the product. He was even accused of not having read some of his works. Yet it was his imagination which conceived D'Artagnan, Porthos, Athos, and Aramis, and his fertile brain which provided for the dauntless trio of *The Three Musketeers* their exciting escapades. Hardly less engrossing are *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Viscount de Bragelonne*, and the numerous other novels from the pen of this unequalled master of the novel of incident. His resources of invention seem inexhaustible. In the Valois romances the young and valiant heroes are often betrayed by the intrigues of

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the unscrupulous; who hesitate at no villainy. Their escapes are as miraculous and their devotion as remarkable as those of the heroes in the dime novels. Dumas, however, has managed to make not only his exaggerated plots but also his romantic characters credible. His joy in an active, bustling life he has imparted to his novels. They may be formless in construction; they may show evidence of careless composition; their nobles and soldiers may never have existed in any century; but they will never cease to afford enjoyment to those who still retain the adventurous spirit of youth.

To find romance George Sand did not need to go to the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. Her own love affairs furnished her with ample material for her many novels. As soon as she discovered the natural tendencies of her dissipated husband, Baron Dudevant, she left him and established herself in Paris. Disregarding the conventions of the day, she dressed as a man, smoked a Turkish pipe, and collected lovers, for she was the advocate of a life of freedom for women in every sphere. She sought love in a series of affairs, the most famous of which were with de Musset and Chopin. She was also dominated by her devotion to her children. When the two passions conflicted, her maternal love proved to be the stronger. To de Musset she wrote, when she realized that their affair was

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over: "If it were not for my children, I would willingly throw myself into the river." Finally she retired to a more peaceful life in the country, where she took a sympathetic interest in the joys and sorrows of the peasants.

George Sand's novels reflect the emotions of the period in which they were written. The early ones, like *Indiana*, defend the right to love. The second group, of which *Consuelo* is typical, deal with social problems. The novels of the last period, however, are her best work, because they seek to establish no theories. *The Little Fadette* and *François the Waif* are pleasing stories of country life. She wrote with careless ease and refused to take her art too seriously. For her the novel was a means of expressing her emotions and recording her personality.

In one of her letters to Gustave Flaubert she wrote: "How you torment yourself, and how you disturb yourself about life!" His pessimism at the imbecility of humanity not only made him unhappy but also colored his work. He hated his time and treated it with ironic satire. Flaubert was an objective writer, finding in minor, commonplace incidents enormous significance. In fact, *L'Education Sentimentale* is almost wholly composed of such incidents. He had a tendency to describe with fulness of detail the horrible, as in the scene depicting Emma Bovary's death. *Madame Bovary* is the story of a

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romantic woman who endeavors to escape from the dulness of her marriage to a provincial doctor by taking any available man as a lover. Flaubert applied his realistic method of description to the past in *Salammbô* and *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. For these novels he read widely and collected a mass of information.

Flaubert labored as tirelessly in the composition of his novels as in the gathering of material. He strove for perfection, spending hours in his search for the right word. The result of this labor was a style so precise and clear that the reader feels "almost materially the things he reproduces."

The disciple whom Flaubert trained in the powers of observation and care in style is Guy de Maupassant. His reputation as a writer of short stories is so great that many do not remember that he also wrote several novels. *Une Vie*, *Bel Ami*, *Pierre et Jean*, and *Fort comme la Mort* are psychological studies of persons suffering from their surroundings. Often Maupassant is cynical and bitter in his treatment, but he strives to present truth by the selection of the significant details.

In his theory concerning the novelist's privilege of selection Maupassant differs from Zola, the champion of the experimental novel. Like a physician noting every symptom of a disease,

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Zola investigated every detail of the ills of society. These ills he exposed in all their disgusting sordidness, so that his critics accused him of want of taste and vulgarity of subject and style. He answered those who protested against his obscenity by the statement, "I have simply done on living bodies the analytical work surgeons do on corpses."

The Rougon-Macquart series, consisting of some twenty novels, shows how heredity and environment affected the branches of a family through several generations. As the members occupied various social positions and engaged in different occupations, Zola has told the story of society in the Second Empire. Drinking shops, markets, flats, railway stations, miners' hovels, and peasants' cottages are the settings for these studies, as well as the dressing-rooms of theaters and the drawing-rooms of society. In spite of some powerful scenes, every novel has tiresome chapters because of the excess of detail and the overemphasis placed upon the scientific method.

The Goncourts were also leaders of the naturalistic school. They wished to give in their novels as accurately as possible their impressions and their observations of real life. Therefore, they announced that the plot was secondary, while clinical studies were to have their chief attention. That theory explains why most of their novels have never had a large audience. *Renée*

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*Mauperin* and *Manette Salomon* have, however, sufficiently dramatic plots and attractive heroines to overcome the effects of the Goncourts' theories.

Altho Alphonse Daudet accepted these theories to the extent of taking "notes from life," he did not carry them to the extreme. He sympathized with the people he portrayed in his novels, particularly the poor and unhappy. Because of this quality and his humor he has been called the Dickens of France. *Le Petit Chose* resembles *David Copperfield* and *Tartarin de Tarascon* has the comic tone of the *Pickwick Papers*. His *Tartarin* is the great hero of his native Provence, which Daudet loved so well. His novels concerning Parisian life are more studied and artificial, with the exception of *Sappho*, a tragic story of modern love. His finest work is characterized by tender feeling without a trace of sentimentality.

Another follower of the Goncourts was J. K. Huysmans, who admired particularly their style. His own style is highly imaginative and carefully adapted to the substance of the paragraph. His pessimistic view is even deeper than Zola's. *En Ménage*, the story of the amorous experiences of a painter and a poet, ends on a note of disillusionment. *A Rebours* substitutes "the dream of reality for reality itself." Finally, Huysmans

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turned to Catholicism and in *La Cathédrale* wrote a novel of religious symbolism.

Altho Anatole France saw as clearly as the naturalists the faults of civilization, he treated them with ironic laughter rather than with pessimistic despair. He was essentially a skeptic amused in a philosophical manner by what he observed. Before he ventured into the field of fiction, he had written history and criticism. Evidences of this critical and scholarly attitude are present in all his works. In *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*, for example, the characters indulge in long conversations upon a variety of subjects. His people are too erudite to be entirely convincing. *Thaïs* is an exposition of the conflict between the philosophies of the ancient world and Christianity. The eighteenth century is the setting for *La Rotisserie de la Reine Pédauque* with its witty hero, Abbé Jérôme Coignard, while the whole of civilization is the subject for satire in *L'Ile des Pingouins* and *La Revolt des Anges*. In a brilliant yet precise and simple style Anatole France launches his ironic attacks, for he is a master of those qualities which distinguish the best French style.

Pierre Loti also gained renown through his style, which reproduced so effectively the impressions made upon him during his voyages as a naval officer. The mystery of the sea and tropical lands pervades his novels. His charac-

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ters are rather vague types, remembered more for their effect upon the feelings of the author than for themselves. *Le Mariage de Loti* and *Madame Chrysanthème* reveal the charm of the author's personality perhaps as well as any of his works.

Of the French novelists, the major portion of whose work has been published since 1900, we shall consider only Romain Rolland, André Gide, and Marcel Proust. Others have done work of merit and have acquired some recognition outside of France, but they have not received the attention given these three. Rolland's long novel, *Jean-Christophe*, traces the career of a musician from his birth in Germany to his death in Paris. Since he has always been a student of music, Rolland has excellently portrayed the peculiarities of the musician's temperament. Jean-Christophe at last wins approval for his compositions, but in his success assumes toward the younger men the same attitude which his predecessors had had toward him. He is self-centered, sacrificing every one to his genius. Rolland has concentrated his efforts upon his hero, with the result that his other characters, particularly the women, are unconvincing. The novel is, however, a résumé of intellectual Europe before the war. The moralist in Rolland is even more evident in *Clérambault*, a "story of a free conscience during the war." The hero lacks the living personality of Jean-



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Christophe, for he is the expounder of the author's ideas. Like Tolstoy, whose life he wrote, Rolland believes that the world needs a revival of the heroic spirit.

A critic of contemporary French literature calls Gide "the foremost prose-writer of his generation." In his style Gide is a classicist, following the tradition of restraint and refinement. Under the influence of Dostoievsky he has shown the efforts of sinning human beings to discover God. He is also concerned with the problems of modern youth in the endeavor to understand life. He has tried to help young people to find answers to some of the baffling questions of adolescence. *The Return of the Prodigal Son* and *The Counterfeiters* are the best examples of these aspects of Gide's work and of his ability as a writer.

In the sixteen volumes of the *Remembrance of Things Past*, Marcel Proust reviews modern society through the observations of a sensitive young writer. The novel is a psychological study of an introspective youth. The hero ponders over his emotional reactions to his experiences from his boyhood days and philosophizes interminably upon ideas suggested by his view of the life about him. In some respects Proust is more of an essayist than a novelist, for his narrative moves very slowly. These characteristics, together with his involved sentence structure and

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elaborately developed metaphors, will prevent his work from being widely read in spite of its excellently drawn characters. Whatever the future judgment of *The Remembrance of Things Past* may be, it is surely the most comprehensive novel of contemporary French literature.

Many of the novels which have been awarded the various French literary prizes have been translated into English and hailed as exceptional work. Their permanent value, however, is difficult to determine. The present reception may be due more to the treatment of new subjects and the studies of abnormal psychology than to their inherent worth. The young French writers are experimenting with the form of the novel in their endeavor to be true to life. They are so concerned with ideas and impressions that they confuse the threads of their stories. Perhaps they will yet evolve a form eminently fitted for the interpretation of contemporary French ideas.

## XVII

### THE RUSSIAN NOVEL

WITHIN the last fifty years English and French readers have become more and more aware of the importance of the Russian novel. Not long ago John Galsworthy included five Russian novels in his list of the twelve best works of fiction. The admiration for Tolstoy has also done much to direct attention to Russian fiction. Furthermore, the uncompromising realism and the dramatic power of the Russian novel have exerted an appeal in this age of frankness. The Russian novelists have faced life unhesitatingly, and altho they have found little beauty in the drabness of ordinary existence, they have revealed the universal motives and conflicts which prevent the majority of mankind from reaching a higher level.

Nikolay Gogol, "the father of the Russian novel," began his literary work with romantic tales of his native Ukraine, entitled *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*. Cossack life was also the inspiration for *Taras Bulba* with its humorous pictures of the farm and army. But Gogol's observation of the inefficiency and the corruption in the civil service, where he had been a minor official, aroused his indignation. Thus he

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began to satirize the Russian imperial system. His short story, *The Cloak*, was the first masterpiece of Russian realism and the inspiration for his successors. "We have all," said Dostoievsky, "issued from Gogol's *Cloak*."

In 1842 Gogol published the first part of *Dead Souls*, the story of the enormous swindle conceived by Chichikov, a dismissed customs official. This rogue obtained loans from a bank on the names of serfs who had died since the last census. He could buy the names from landlords for an insignificant sum because these landlords had to pay the tax upon them until the next census. Chichikov's journeys throughout Russia on his quest for dead souls and his dealings with various types of landlords offered Gogol an opportunity not only for satire but also for humor. His attitude of sympathy for the serfs, his treatment of character, and his method of telling the story show the results of his study of Cervantes and Dickens.

If in Gogol's delineation of character we notice traces of Dickens's tendency to caricature, we are impressed with the naturalness of the characters in the novels of Ivan Goncharov and Ivan Turgenev. Goncharov belonged to the town, while Turgenev was a member of the country nobility. Each shows the typical Russian in the environment with which he was acquainted. Goncharov's *Obломov* is a study of a Russian gentle-

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man who refuses to leave his sofa for active participation in life. Oblomov is the incarnation of inertia in the Russian temperament of the period before the emancipation of the serfs.

Turgenev vowed to fight for this emancipation. On account of the strictness of the censorship he was forced to use an indirect method. In his *Sketches of a Sportsman* he aroused pity for the peasants by describing the conditions under which they lived. After the emancipation he portrayed the hero of the younger generation, who rebelled against authority in his desire for individual development. To this type he gave the name of Nihilist. The conflict between the individualist and the advocate of obedience to authority is the theme of *Fathers and Sons*. Turgenev was as successful in depicting feminine character as he was in drawing the young Russian intellectual. His women have been described as "less intelligent than a man, but more decided." At any rate, they are usually charming.

Turgenev's education in Germany and long residence in Paris made him more European than most of the Russian novelists. He spoke of George Sand as "one of my saints." The influence of the French novelists is evident in his mastery of form and precision of style. Russian critics praise very highly the beauty of his prose. If he had written only *A Lear of the*

## THE RUSSIAN NOVEL

*Steppes, Smoke, and Torrents of Spring*, he would have been recognized as a great artist.

Turgenev once told Feodor Dostoievsky that he regarded himself as a German and that he was settled definitely in Baden-Baden. The younger novelist's devotion to Russia was, on the other hand, confirmed by his travels in Europe. He was thoroughly imbued with the national traits and had supreme faith in the Russian peasant. When a publisher read Dostoievsky's story, *Poor Folks*, he remarked, "Let me announce the appearance of a new Gogol."

Dostoievsky's sympathy for the poor folk nearly caused his death, for in 1849 he was condemned to be shot for the expression of his political views. Pardoned at the last minute, he was sent to Siberia for four years. *Memories of the House of the Dead* is the record of this period. This novel contains also his theory of the power of expiation, which was to be further developed in *Crime and Punishment*. Raskolnikov, a poor student, murders a pawn-broker because he feels that life has been unjust to him. He is tortured by the preying of the crime upon his mind and finally confesses to Sonia, who advises him to expiate his crime by giving himself up to the police and going to Siberia. He is redeemed through the love of this girl of the streets. The conflicts in the soul of Raskolnikov are symbolic of the conflicts in the Russian soul

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and in the European soul. These also can be ended only by "a brotherly love for all men's brothers." This belief Dostoevsky announced in a speech in memory of Pushkin.

*The Brothers Karamazov* is a complete analysis of the various aspects of the Russian soul as revealed in the different persons of the novel. The story revolves around the sinner Dmitri and the saint Alyosha. Dostoevsky seems to be continually asking himself, What do these people think and feel about the events of their lives and the persons with whom they come into contact? Is there any escape from the dissatisfaction with life? His answer is that the sensual and selfish nature of man must be conquered by the spirit of forgiveness and love.

Tolstoy taught the same lesson of unselfishness and the brotherhood of man in his later writings. Two short stories, "God Sees the Truth, but Waits" and "Where Love Is, There God Is Also," give the essence of his creed, derived from the parables of the Gospels. *Resurrection* preaches the doctrine of non-resistance and illustrates the practical application of the Tolstoyan creed. Tolstoy's friends thought that his preoccupation with social and moral reforms was depriving Russian literature of a great creative writer. Turgenev voiced their plea when he wrote from his death-bed: "Great master of our Russian tongue, come back to your literary

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labors." During the next twenty-five years, however, Tolstoy became more and more the moral philosopher seeking perfection, even to his last hours in a small railway station as he was on his way to a monastery.

The Tolstoy of this last period appears to be far different from the youth of the *Diaries*, but there is no real inconsistency in his character. From his university days he was dissatisfied with the frivolous life of the Russian nobility and was examining rationally the problem of a satisfactory philosophy. This questioning of life runs through the *Sebastopol* stories. The first solution drawn from his experiences in the Caucasus was that one should accept life as it came and "should live so as to have the best for oneself and one's family." This view is the philosophy of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karénina*. In these works natural man is contrasted with man in a state of sophisticated civilization. They are novels of moral rather than social conflicts. The characters are revealed by the method of psychological analysis and the presentation of an enormous amount of personal detail to bring out dominating traits. They are more real than most of the persons we meet in fiction, because they experience the ordinary trifling annoyances and because they speak in a language colloquial to their class. This attention to character caused Tolstoy to neglect the narrative move-



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ment in his novels. Consequently some incidents have no essential bearing on the story.

The fatalistic theory is the keynote of *War and Peace*, a long novel concerning Napoleon's campaign in Russia. Although Tolstoy distorts historical events to fit his theory, he paints an impressive background. Anna Karénina is also the victim of the fatal consequences following her decision to leave her husband for the brilliant Vronsky. In contrast to their story, Tolstoy pictures the happiness of Levin and Kitty. The idea which Tolstoy wished to convey in *Anna Karénina* is that kindness and consideration for the others, no matter what their station in life, are more admirable characteristics than intellectual ability accompanied by vanity. Here is the germ of his later teaching—that "truth is to be found in working like a peasant."

When Tolstoy died in 1910, he had been long recognized as the greatest figure in Russian literature. In honor of the centenary of his birth, a new edition of his complete works in ninety volumes is being prepared. This edition will contain some ten thousand pages of hitherto unpublished material, largely from the diaries and letters. From this material we may expect to obtain a complete understanding of the most influential writer of his generation.

Many novels of revolutionary Russia have been merely political propaganda or expressions

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of the radical ideas of the Intelligentsia. A few, however, have interpreted the spirit of the new régime. Gorky's *Forma Gordeev*, *The Mother*, and *Decadence* emphasize the degradation and ignorance of provincial life with all his customary bitterness. Bunin also aimed to show the peasant as he really was. *The Village* is a powerful but depressing picture of poverty and brutality. The effect wrought by the coarseness of the army upon a sensitive young officer is the subject of Kuprin's *The Duel*, which was received as an attack upon the Imperial Army. The chief representative of the symbolists is Sologub, whose *The Little Demon* a Russian critic has called "the most perfect Russian novel since the death of Dostoievsky." In this novel Peredonov represents evil and hatred rejoicing in miseries of others. The future of the Russian novel is at present in the hands of the censorship of the Communist Party. What its course may be, none can tell.

## XVIII

### THE NOVEL IN OTHER EUROPEAN LITERATURES

COMPARATIVELY few novelists of other European literatures than French and Russian have been widely read outside their own countries. Their works have been known chiefly to students of European literature, who have sometimes overrated the worth of a novel in their enthusiasm. Occasionally a book like *Quo Vadis* has become extremely popular because of some particular appeal. Within the last twenty-five years, however, translations of novels from these literatures have become more numerous. To some extent the awards of the Nobel prize have directed attention to contemporary novelists, as the reading public has wished to discover the reason for the award.

The first novel in German literature to secure an international reputation for its author was Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*, a sentimental romance, somewhat in the manner of Richardson. Goethe's passion for Charlotte Buff, the fiancée of his friend Kestner, and the suicide of an acquaintance on account of hopeless love furnished the basis for this pathetic story. The idealistic pictures of family life show the influ-

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ence of Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*. All over Europe young men admired Werther, imitated him in dress and manners, wept at his sufferings, and even shot themselves in despair when they deemed their love unrequited.

To the composition of the first part of *Wilhelm Meister* Goethe devoted almost twenty years. The hero changes from a weak idealist absorbed by his interest in the theater to a sincere seeker after the realities of life. This change was produced by his learning the story of the charming Mignon and the old harper, perhaps the most appealing characters Goethe ever created. The second part of *Wilhelm Meister*, published twenty-five years later, contains some excellent writing, but lacks coherent development. *Elective Affinities*, inspired by another of Goethe's love affairs, is a psychological study, showing the effect of too constant companionship upon four persons, two married and two single. It is a warning against the inevitable consequences of such association.

The numerous imitations of Goethe's novels lack the sincerity of feeling which made the originals great works. They are usually excessively sentimental in their presentation of a romantic hero. It is hard for a modern reader to understand the popularity of Jean Paul's (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter's) *Titan* or the appeal of his humor for Carlyle. One of the last

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and best examples of this autobiographical type of novel so dear to the romanticists is Gottfried Keller's *The Green Henry*, tracing his own spiritual development. His short stories about Swiss life are, however, much more enjoyable reading, as he has preserved the customs of his country.

During the last half of the nineteenth century the German novel was at a low ebb. Between 1872 and 1880 Gustav Freytag wrote a group of historical novels, entitled collectively *The Ancestors*. He tried to awake a spirit of nationalism by recounting in these books glorious incidents from Germany's past, for this was the period when the various German states were being formed into the present German nation. The transition was not particularly favorable to the novel. But the unwieldy nature of German prose delayed its development even more. Mark Twain ridiculed the construction of the German sentence by a very apt anecdote. One day he was reading a continued story in a German paper. He came to the end of the instalment only to find that the verb was in the section to be printed the next day. Fortunately, Nietzsche was proving that German prose could be written in a lucid and simple manner.

Among the contemporary writers in Germany, Herman Sudermann, Thomas Mann, Jacob Wassermann, Frank Thiess, and Lion Feuchtwanger

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have achieved success in the field of fiction, both at home and abroad. Altho Sudermann is known primarily as a dramatist, he has written some good novels and short stories. *Dame Care* is the story of a youth beset by poverty and misfortune. In *The Song of Songs* he shows in detail the gradual degeneration of a weak-willed woman. The stories in *The Indian Lily and Other Stories* are also studies of character. *The Mad Professor*, recently published, gives further evidence of Sudermann's training as a dramatist.

Thomas Mann writes in a serious and philosophical vein about the disappointments and sorrows of life. For that reason his longer novels, *Buddenbrooks* and *The Magic Mountain*, become somewhat monotonous reading. He is too much a novelist of ideas. In his short stories, such as "Death in Venice" and "Disorder and Early Sorrow," he does not have the opportunity to yield so fully to these tendencies. Their melancholy is less emphasized, while their sympathetic tenderness is not overshadowed by lengthy discussions.

*The World's Illusion* established the reputation of Jacob Wassermann as one of the outstanding novelists of this generation. Wassermann is a seeker for truth, having a prophetic vision. He is greatly interested in the causes and effects of human relationships. His last novel, *The Maurizius Case*, deals with efforts of

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a sixteen-year-old boy to establish the fact that his father sentenced an innocent man to prison.

The attitude of the youth of the post-war generation in Germany is the subject of a tetralogy by Frank Thiess. Two parts, *The Fool's Paradise* and *The Gateway to Life*, have been translated into English. They reveal Thiess as a novelist of surprising vigor. He understands clearly the eternal problems of adolescence. Wolf Brassen, the chief character of the novel, is the representative of the modern youth questioning the adequacy of his education to help him find himself.

The advantages which an enterprising, wealthy Jew gained from the political intrigues carried on by the German states in the eighteenth century form the theme of Feuchtwanger's *Power*. As the princes were always in need of money, Süß could enforce his demands. Yet he finally discovered that money was not an all-protective power. For the story and background of *The Ugly Duchess*, Feuchtwanger went to the Middle Ages. The novel is an amazing picture of the sordidness, immorality, and barbarity of the period. Not a single character is attractive, while the antics of the duchess are at times distinctly grotesque.

Judging from the ability and promise of the younger writers, it seems as tho the German novel were entering upon the period of its greatest development. Definitely freed from the

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sentimental tradition of Goethe and the heavy style of the older novel, these writers have brought new vigor to their work.

Dutch literature and Flemish literature have each had one novelist important in European literature. Louis Couperus was the most prominent literary man in modern Holland. His tetralogy, *The Books of Small Souls*, is his most ambitious work. Hendrik Conscience wrote stories of Flemish life with the purpose of keeping alive the language, which was being superseded by French, the official language of Belgium.

Not until the present century have novels by Scandinavian writers been translated to any great extent. In the previous century a few writers had, however, an important influence upon the prose of their literatures. The Danish novelist Jons Jacobsen was a disciple of Flaubert and Turgenev in the attention he gave to exact expression. His *Niels Lyhne*, entitled *Siren Voices* in the English translation, was praised by such discriminating critics as Brandes and Saintsbury. In 1917 the Nobel Prize for Literature was divided between two Danish novelists, Karl Gjellerup and Pontopidan, who has written a powerful novel about country folk.

The struggles of ordinary people have also been the subjects of the best-known Norwegian



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and Swedish novels. Among these are Jonas Lie's *The Pilot and His Wife*, *The Life Prisoner*, reminiscent of Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Family at Gilje*; Björnson's *The Heritage of the Kurts* and his short stories; Garborg's *Tired Men*; and Strindberg's *The Red Room*. Knut Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil* and *Hunger* have had a greater popularity with foreign readers than any other Scandinavian novels. He pictures clearly and bitterly the hardships suffered by primitive natures and often adds a touch of irony. Another aspect of his writing, the presentation of various moods, dominates such books as *Pan* and *Mysteries*. In these works he is akin to the introspective novelists.

Three women have also had an important part in Scandinavian fiction, two of them being recipients of the Nobel prize. Frederika Bremer was a romanticist, who wrote during the first half of the nineteenth century. *The H. Family* and *Sketches of Every-day Life* are known to English readers by the translations of Mary Howitt. Like George Sand, she was an ardent advocate for the rights of women.

Selma Lagerlöf's *The Story of Gösta Berling* relates the incidents in the career of a kindly Swedish clergyman who was unfrocked because of his one failing—drunkenness. Her stories for

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children have delighted many adults as well as young people.

In 1928 the Nobel Prize winner was Sigrid Undset, who has recreated Scandinavia of the past in *Kristin Lavransdatter* and *The Master of Hestviken*. By her analysis of the emotions of her historical characters she has presented them as living personalities. Her studies with her father, a Norwegian archeologist, have made her as familiar with the life of the Middle Ages as tho she had participated in it. This knowledge accounts for the realistic background in her novels.

The Polish novelist, Henry Sienkiewicz, on the other hand, treated history from the romantic point of view. *Quo Vadis?* is a dramatic account of the struggle between Christianity and Roman Imperialism in the reign of Nero. In spite of his exaggerations he has caught very well the spirit of the period. *Fire and Sword*, *The Flood*, and *Mr. Valodovski* deal with heroic struggles in Polish history.

A year in the life of a family of Polish peasants is depicted in the four volumes of Ladislav Reymont's *The Peasants*. It is a rather grim picture, occasionally brightened by a pleasing incident. Hard work and strong passions are the dominant factors. Reymont knew and loved the peasants and has given a faithful record of their feelings. In an earlier work, *The Promised Land*, he showed the effects of industrialism upon the

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society of a Polish city. As he believed materialism was destroying the soul of his people, he emphasized the degrading influences brought by the desire for wealth. *The Promised Land* is not so convincing or so impressive as *The Peasants* because Reymont did not sympathize with the aims of the characters.

In Italy the novel also came under the influence of Goethe's *Werther*. The Italian *Werther* was *Jacopo Ortis* by Ugo Foscolo. Besides the sentimental scenes among the Euganean hills, the book contains descriptions of Italy's sufferings under the Austrian oppression. In 1815 Foscolo went to England, where he lived for a number of years. He contributed articles on the Italian authors of the Renaissance to the *Quarterly Review* and translated Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* into his native language.

The leader of the romantic school of fiction in Italy was Alessandro Manzoni. His historical novel of the seventeenth century, *The Betrothed*, was praised by Goethe and Scott. The deep feeling and the fine style of this novel have kept the name of Manzoni alive long after his tragedies have been forgotten. But even should *The Betrothed* be no longer read, Manzoni would be remembered because Verdi composed the famous *Requiem* in his honor.

Another novelist whose name is connected with a famous musical composition is Giovanni Verga.

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The first story in his *Cavalleria Rusticana* furnished the libretto for Mascagni's opera. Verga wrote about the peasant life of his native Sicily. In 1925 D. H. Lawrence translated into English *Mastro-Don Gesualdo*, a novel dealing with southern passion.

A few years ago when the Nobel Prize was awarded to Grazia Deledda for *The Flight into Egypt*, the world became aware that Sardinia also had a novelist of merit. Her stories and novels depicting Sardinian customs and manners are based upon the observations of her youth. For the last twenty-five years she has been living in Rome and has recently turned to other subjects. Her ability to portray the crises in the lives of her feminine characters is her greatest talent.

Altho Luigi Pirandello is known to Americans primarily as a dramatist, he did not begin to write plays until he was past fifty. His early works were novels and collections of short stories. He is essentially romantic by nature, evolving strange plots and depicting peculiar characters swayed by their moods. He has been called an intellectualized and sophisticated Verga in his treatment of Sicilian types. *The Old and the Young* and *Shoot* reveal Pirandello's cynical attitude toward contemporary civilization with its "clamorous and dizzy machinery of life."

The group of young writers with whom

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Pirandello allied himself revolted against the elaborate style of Gabriele D'Annunzio. This tendency to fine writing has weakened the majority of D'Annunzio's novels, but a book like *The Triumph of Death* proves that at times he could write impressively as well as brilliantly. The reaction to classical tradition in Italian literature as well as to the ideals of D'Annunzio was started in 1912 by F. T. Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto, of which the key-word was freedom. The experiments of the futurists have been an interesting but not a permanent contribution to Italian literature.

After the period of Cervantes, Spanish fiction declined until the middle of the nineteenth century. The principal figure in the revival was José María de Pereda. Just before Pereda went to Madrid, Fernán Caballero had written her popular novel, *La Gaviota*. Her descriptions of native scenes led Pereda to turn to Spanish subjects and characters. Thus he became the founder of realism in the Spanish novel. The extremely local character of his work, depicting generally the scenes of his native Montaña, have prevented even his best novels, *Sotileza* and *Peñas Arriba*, from gaining attention outside of Spain.

The same thing is true to a slightly less extent of the contemporaries of Pereda. They are all so intensely national that a wider knowledge of Spanish history and customs than that of the

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average foreigner is needed to appreciate them fully. Juan Valera is an idealist and mystic, whose *Pepita Jiménez* relates the struggle of a priest with ascetic ideals against the charms of Pepita. Pedro Antonio de Alarcón is a romanticist with a gift for dramatic narration. The humorous adventures and the lively narrative of his *El Sombrero de tres Picos* have assured him a permanent place in Spanish literature. Many of his stories are improbable, but they are vividly told and always entertaining.

A great admirer of Pereda was Benito Pérez Galdós, who has described in his *Episodios Nacionales* the chief events of Spanish history in the nineteenth century. Besides these episodes he wrote many novels attacking the faults of the contemporary society of Madrid but pointing out the admirable characteristics of the Spanish people. In the immense number and individuality of the characters in his novels he resembles Dickens. His ability to elicit the interest of the reader even in minor figures and his mastery of detail are his most notable traits.

After the death of Pérez Galdós, the recognized leader of Spanish novelists was Emilia Pardo Bazán. Her realistic novels about Galicia, especially *Los Pazos de Ulloa* and *La Madre Naturaleza*, and her critical remarks concerning the method of Zola caused her to be classed with the naturalists. She does not seek the repulsive

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intentionally, but never avoids disagreeable facts if they are necessary adjuncts of her stories.

Armando Palacio Valdés was also influenced by the French naturalistic school, but he was broader in his view of domestic life. *Marta y María* and *La Hermana San Sulpicio* contain excellent studies of feminine character as he had observed it in the homes of Asturias. His novels are written in a natural, easy style, enlivened by a sense of humor.

In addition to these principal writers of fiction in the last half of the nineteenth century, several others published novels which attracted considerable attention. Among these are *La Regenta* by Leopoldo Alas, Jacinto Octavio Picón's *Dulce y Sabrosa*, and José María Matheu's *Jaque a la Reina*.

Of twentieth-century Spanish novelists, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez is the most widely read in Europe and America. The scene of his early novels was Valencia, which he knew intimately. Later he used the novel to convey his revolutionary ideas and social theories. He is primarily a novelist of action, often violent, as readers of *Los Cuatro Jinetes del Apocalipsis* (*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*) and *Sangre y Arena* (*Blood and Sand*) will recall. He gives little thought to plot, characterization, or style. With tremendous force he asserts his ideas by showing the reaction of the crowd to a

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particular environment. The background assumes a place of major importance in his stories.

Pío Baroja's novels are also filled with action. His favorite theme is the life of the lower classes, which he treats objectively. In *La FERIA de los Discretos* (*The Market-place of the Discreet*), for example, the different types of a city pass in review. Baroja has written several trilogies, recounting the adventures of his wandering heroes, who find little satisfaction in life. He takes a pessimistic view of modern society because unhappiness and strife bring so much discontent.

The appeal of the novels of Ramón María del Valle-Inclán will always be to those who delight in the work of a conscious artist. He strives for a rhythmical prose, giving much attention to sound. For that reason adequate translations of his work are rare. His trilogy on the second Carlist War is his best work.

Recently writers in the Spanish-speaking countries of South America have attracted some attention by their novels and stories on native themes. From them may come in the future some valuable contributions to Spanish literature, since a national culture is developing under the more stable governments.

During the last decade there has been an increasing interest among English and American readers in the literatures discussed in this chap-



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ter. Translations of the more characteristic novels have been made, and books and articles have been written in English about the leading authors. Such a manifestation of interest is a hopeful sign, for acquaintance with the fiction of a people leads to a better understanding of national traits.

## XIX

### THE MODERN SHORT STORY

WITH the increase in the number of magazines the demand for short stories has become very great. They are the chief reading matter for a large section of the population, which does not have time for the novel. Furthermore, the stories in a magazine require less concentration than a long novel. They deal intensively with one situation and develop rapidly to a climax. Everyone with any inclination for writing has endeavored to supply this market. The result has been a multitude of very indifferent stories in the older forms and some striking experiments by recent writers.

Most of the novelists discussed in the preceding chapters have written short stories, which in general have the same characteristics as their novels. Therefore we shall not consider them unless they have had an important place in the history of the short story.

The difference between the narratives of the Renaissance and the modern short story lies primarily in the matter of coherent development. The former are a collection of episodes bearing more or less directly on a central theme, while the modern short story progresses directly

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to a definite goal. In early literature the parables of the *New Testament* resemble most closely the short story. The accounts of the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, and the unworthy servant, for example, have the main elements of excellent short stories, but their plots are merely outlined. All the details of setting and character are left to the imagination of the reader. The narrator desired to teach a moral truth as directly as possible. Therefore, he gave only the essential facts.

The immediate predecessors of the short story are the romantic tales of Hoffmann, the fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers in German and those of Hans Christian Andersen in Danish, and Washington Irving's legends of the Dutch settlers of New York. Influenced by the Gothic romances, Hoffmann peopled his tales with grotesque characters and prowling ghosts. His striking descriptions and analytical power redeem such tales as *The Devil's Elixir* from the worst faults of the type. *The Kinder und Hausmärchen* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm retell the folktales of the German forest and countryside. In the preface the world of these tales is described. "Kings, princes, faithful servants, honest craftsmen, above all, fishermen, millers, charcoal burners and shepherds, all the folk who live nearest to nature appear in it." Andersen also found the material for many of his fairy-tales in folk-

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lore. He gave to them, however, a charm which no other writer has ever been able to attain. He has no rival in the affection of children the world over. Altho Irving's *Rip Van Winkle*, *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, and *Tales of a Traveler* are superior in characterization to the other tales written during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, they hardly marked an advance in the development of plot in the short story. They lack the condensation so emphasized by Edgar Ellan Poe as the essential characteristic of the short story.

When Poe was struggling to gain recognition as a writer, he received from a Baltimore paper a prize of one hundred dollars for a *MS. found in a Bottle*, a romantic story of adventure. After this success he wrote about seventy stories, ranging from purely romantic narratives to analytical studies of obsessed conscience. A well-known group is composed of stories in which he solved mysteries, such as those in *The Gold Bug*, *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, and *The Mystery of Marie Roget*. His favorite themes, however, were fear, terror, revenge, and physical horror. The atmosphere of his stories adds to the powerful impression they produce upon the reader. His ability to create a vivid effect by weird and suggestive settings has never been surpassed. The dampness of the vaults described in *The Cask of Amontillado* and the gloom of

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*The House of Usher* pervade these stories with their sinister significance.

The appeal of Poe's stories is almost entirely an intellectual one, for he arouses no feeling of sympathy for the victims or of hatred for the murderers. The persons in his stories lack individuality. We learn little about them except that they are tortured by some fear or dominated by some motive. Poe is primarily concerned with the solution of a problem or the depiction of a mood induced by some exceptional event. The tone is often morbid or melancholy, with death playing a principal part. When Poe tried to write stories in a lighter tone, he failed because he had no real sense of humor. His province was the horrible. The gruesome scenes in such stories as *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Black Cat*, and *Ligeia* make the reader shudder at the vividness of the description.

Poe's subjects are universal and not local. In all his work there is nothing about American life. For that reason his genius was recognized in Europe when American authors were generally disregarded. His direct manner and concise style appealed particularly to the French. The American readers of the nineteenth century were shocked at his attitude toward life and missed in his stories the moral lesson to which they were accustomed.

As he supplied this moral lesson, Hawthorne

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was far more representative of the period. Furthermore, he discovered the romantic element in New England history and became its interpreter. His stories reflect his own reserved and serious nature. He said that they should be read at twilight because they could not stand the sunshine. Many are allegorical and symbolical. The external events merely indicate the conflict of spiritual forces in the hearts of the characters. The mental states resulting from these conflicts are analyzed in careful studies. *Ethan Brand*, for instance, is the study of a man who developed the intellect at the expense of the heart.

Hawthorne's romances of New England life show that he possessed a subtle humor. The misadventures of the tobacco pedler in *Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe* and the eagerness of the old people in *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* for the elixir of life are most amusing in revealing human nature. Hawthorne's understanding of human nature is evident in practically all the stories in *Twice-Told Tales* and *Mosses from an Old Manse*. His aim was never to "swerve aside from the human heart."

The easterners of Hawthorne's generation considered the far West a region of violence unrestrained by authority. The inhabitants of the California mining camps were supposed to be so hardened that they had no compassion for the unfortunate. Francis Bret Harte, who lived in

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the West from 1854 to 1870, found these people to be as sympathetic and kind to those in trouble as any other class. In *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, *Tennessee's Partner*, *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*, and other stories he pictured the West as it actually was in the early days. The simple pathos and humor of these stories brought him great popularity in the East. Unfortunately, his later work was inferior because it lacked originality. Bret Harte was the discoverer of the West as the subject for realistic fiction. Since his day many authors have written stories about the settlement of the vast country beyond the Mississippi, but few have caught its spirit so well.

The short story was further developed by the two French masters, Mérimée and Maupassant. Their stories are remarkable for the conciseness and directness with which emotions are portrayed. Sometimes a single short sentence reveals the tragedy or irony of the whole story. Prosper Mérimée was particularly attracted by the colorful scenes of Corsican and Spanish life. His plots are tragic, and his characters are impetuous. But he is singularly restrained in his treatment. He coolly analyzes the reasons why persons act as they do. *Mateo Falcone*, *La Venus d'Ille* and *Carmen* are masterpieces of this kind of character study. Through Bizet's opera the fascinating but faithless cigaret girl, *Carmen*,

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has become known to many who have never read Mérimée.

Maupassant was even more cynical. He was impressed with the selfishness and meanness of the majority of persons. So many seemed to delight in persecuting the unfortunate or the simple-minded for their own gain or pleasure. This attitude is the theme of *Ball-of-Fat* and *The Piece of String*. The ironic situations of life furnished Maupassant with material for another type of story. An example is *The False Gems*, which brings out his cynicism. Often his characters are the victims of a delusion only to be enlightened after it is too late. Like Mme. Loisel in *The Necklace* they discover that their sacrifices have all been in vain.

Some of Maupassant's stories are merely impressionistic sketches of a mood resulting from some special circumstances. He was reporting impersonally what he had observed, and concealed nothing, even tho the details were sordid. The freedom with which he treats unpleasant subjects repels the reader. In scenes of misery and cruelty he found the most dramatic material. The events of the Franco-Prussian War gave him an opportunity to show in *Father Milon*, *Two Friends*, and similar stories the hatred and brutality engendered by war. In a cold, unemotional manner Maupassant dealt with the harsh aspects of life. The intense reality



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of the scenes is due to his remarkable skill in construction.

By an entirely different method Anton Chekhov gains an equally impressive realism. His stories are loosely constructed, so that often the connection between the action and the conclusion is not clear. He reveals his characters by a description of the atmosphere which surrounds them and produces their moods. They are overburdened by the dullness of existence. This sense of futility was an obsession with Chekhov. When he was sixteen, he wrote to a friend: "I received your letter at the height of the most awful boredom." Again at the age of forty-four he wrote: "Things are going very well with me, but it is very monotonous and boring; one day is very much like another." This feeling accounts for the similarity of Chekhov's characters and explains his sympathy for them.

His subjects are frequently unimportant; for they are merely minor episodes in the everyday lives of ordinary persons. Nevertheless, they bring out strikingly the unhappiness, superstition, disillusionment, and weaknesses of character which are universal. In the failure of persons to understand each other there is tragic humor as well as pathos. The Russian critics have used the phrase "tears through laughter" to describe this quality in Chekhov's work. The development of his unique manner may be traced

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by comparing *The Steppe*, *Happiness*, and *Vanka*, stories written in his earlier period, with those written after 1890, among which are such perfect examples of his art as *Ward No. 6*, *The Teacher of Literature*, and *The Lady with the Dog*.

Maxim Gorky's stories are even more gloomy, for his early experiences as a bootmaker's boy, pantry boy, worker in an underground bakery, and laborer in South Russia, where he came into contact with vagabonds, thieves, harlots, and outcasts of every type, made him extremely bitter. His name is Aleksey Maksimovich Péshkov, but he chose as a pen-name Gorky, meaning bitter or miserable. The stories belong to the early period of his literary work; since 1900 he has been writing novels, dramas, and autobiographical books. He began with romantic stories like *Chelkash* and *My Fellow-Traveler*, but soon turned to realism. *Her Lover* and *Twenty-six Men and a Girl*, perhaps his finest stories, illustrate the idea that "the more a human creature has tasted of bitter things the more it hungers after the sweet things of life." Poor Teresa longs for a faithful lover, and the twenty-six bakers seek for an ideal of innocence and beauty. Gorky invariably spoils the artistic effect of his stories by a tendency to philosophize on social conditions. Since this tendency has increased, his later novels and dramas with a few exceptions are in-

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ferior. His position in contemporary literature is due primarily to his attitude toward Revolutionary Russia.

Second only to Gorky in popularity at home and abroad among twentieth-century Russian writers has been Leonid Nikolaevich Andreyev. In America he is known especially as the author of the drama, *He Who Gets Slapped*. As he belonged to the *intelligentsia*, he was restless and dissatisfied with life. Nothing seemed real to him but death, which is prominent in many of his stories. *Once upon a Time There Lived, The Governor*, and *The Seven that Were Hanged* are studies of how men meet the death they know to be inevitable. Another group might be characterized by the opening words of *The Red Laugh*—"madness and horror." Andreyev is not pleasant reading, but he describes very powerfully, altho in a somewhat elaborate style, abnormal states of mind.

The French and Russian writers were primarily interested in the realistic story of moods and passions. The English writers were more successful with the story of adventure and mystery. Stevenson's *Sir de Malétoit's Door* and *A Lodging for the Night* are romantic tales of the fifteenth century, when the unexpected might occur at any moment. Even his psychological character studies, such as *Markheim*, show evidences of his fancy and imagination. Since he was always

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concerned with events for their own sake, he propounded no philosophical ideas or social theories.

The detective story is the most popular form of the mystery story. From the vast number of such stories only a few have qualities which entitle them to consideration. A. Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, traces the criminal or solves the mystery from some minor and previously neglected bit of evidence. G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown, on the other hand, reconstructs the circumstances of the crime by imagining himself in the place of the criminal. The conclusion reached by the writers of detective fiction is that there is no perfect crime. The majority, however, go to rather absurd extremes to prove their contention.

Another type of story which English writers have favored is that of local color. The master of this type is Rudyard Kipling, whose *Plain Tales from the Hills*, *Jungle Books*, *Soldiers Three*, *The Day's Work*, and other well-known collections have proved that people are very much the same whether they live in India or the Sussex countryside. During his younger days Kipling was a journalist on an Anglo-Indian daily. He was an ardent imperialist, expressing the ideas current in the last years of Queen Victoria's reign. In a review of *Debits and Cred-*

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its, a recent collection of stories, Brander Matthews stated Kipling's creed: "Obey the law, do your duty; play the game, be a man, and do the day's work." From this creed it is easy to see why he is not esteemed by the "Young Intellectuals." But they could learn much from his method of observation and his craftsmanship. *Without Benefit of Clergy*, *The Man Who Was*, *The Courting of Dinah Shadd*, *The Man Who Would Be King*, and *The Brushwood Boy* alone justify the claims of the admirers of Kipling that in variety of subject and understanding of treatment he has few rivals.

Other examples of local-color stories in contemporary English fiction are James M. Barrie's sketches of Scotch life in *A Window in Thrums* and *Auld Licht Idyls*, and Israel Zangwill's interpretations of Jewish life in *Ghetto Tragedies* and *Ghetto Comedies*. Barrie's stories have the charm of quaintness. The amusing inhabitants of Thrums seem to have been transported from the eighteenth century into the twentieth without any realization of the changed conditions in the outside world. They are sufficient unto themselves.

Zangwill's characters are very conscious of modern conditions and struggle against the obstacles of their surroundings. His theme, often treated humorously, is the conflict between the

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traditional and new ideas as it affects the destiny of his race.

The local color for the stories of O. Henry (William Sydney Porter) was obtained from his boyhood days in North Carolina, his experiences on a ranch in Texas, his wanderings through Central and South America, and his residence in New York. In *The Four Million* he relates with pathos and humor the pleasures and sorrows of the clerks, the shop girls, the policemen, the denizens of the crowded tenements, and the various other persons in the bustling crowd of a great city. With as keen observation he caught the underlying spirit of the other sections he visited. Every story in any one of his more representative volumes, such as *Roads of Destiny*, *Cabbages and Kings*, and *Options*, reveals his intimate knowledge of the thoughts and feelings of the great majority. This is the secret of his popularity with the casual reader.

Another reason for this popularity is his hatred of literary conventions. He is so brief and rapid that his style at times becomes telegraphic. His use of colloquialisms and slang increases the naturalness of his dialog but will restrict the appeal of his work because of the local and temporary character of such phraseology. O. Henry's method is to surprize the reader. By a careful arrangement of details he leads his readers to expect a certain conclusion. Then in the

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last paragraph he discloses the true situation and ends with an unexpected climax. This method becomes very monotonous if several stories are read at the same time, but is effective for a single story. Thus O. Henry holds the interest and compels the reader to finish the story to see what happens. For a time after his success the surprise ending dominated the American short story.

The successors of O. Henry in the humorous delineation of certain American types and the use of unconventional language are Irvin Cobb and Ring Lardner. Cobb described himself adequately and justly when he said, "I'm still a reporter, and I expect to be a reporter always." His *Old Judge Priest* and other collections of Southern stories prove his contention that he has a "sense of news values." His stories are composed of elaborate descriptions, amusing incidents, and rapid-fire conversations in colloquial diction. Lardner's humor has similar qualities in that it is based on bad grammar, puns, and the misuse of words. But Lardner is more satirical concerning American failings than Cobb. The desire of the uncultured newly rich to gain a place in society, and the general boredom, are the objects of his ridicule. *You Know Me, Al*, the letters of a baseball player, is a treasury of American slang.

We shall conclude the discussion of the short

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story with two writers who have been compared with Chekhov. In England, Katherine Mansfield won praise for her characterization and careful treatment of significant details in the stories in *Bliss*, followed by *The Garden Party* and *The Dove's Nest*. When she died in 1923 at the age of thirty-four, English fiction lost "probably the most faithful and at the same time the most original of Chekhov's disciples," according to Prince Mirsky.

The failure of persons to understand one another and the drabness of American life in a small town are the themes of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. "It is," he says, "only at rare moments that we live." Our lives are ordinarily dull because we are trying to adapt ourselves to more or less uncongenial surroundings. His youths do too much thinking about the problems of existence to be representative American boys in their adolescent years. They are exceptionally sensitive and artistic in temperament. Anderson has, nevertheless, pointed out an important fact, namely, that in the confusion of modern life there is little mutual understanding of the views held by persons in different environments.

The tendency among the more serious writers of the short story to-day seems to be away from the carefully developed story of plot and toward the story of character. Some, like Ernest



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Hemingway in *Men Without Women*, let the dialog convey the impression. Others resort to precise descriptions. But all desire more freedom in form and expression.

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THE Greek drama originated in the choral hymns chanted at the festivals in honor of Dionysus, god of wine. These hymns expressed commiseration for the trials which the god had suffered during his sojourns on earth. Sometimes the leader of the chorus would relate myths concerning these experiences. The chorus was dressed as satyrs, the half-human and half-goat-like attendants of the god. From the Greek word meaning goat, *tragos*, is derived tragedy. After the formal part of the celebration at the altar of Dionysus the crowd, inspired by the wine, probably sang comic songs during the procession or *comos*. These were the origin of comedy. This form of the drama, however, was developed much later than tragedy.

Thespis is supposed to have invented tragedy by having the leader of the chorus carry on a brief dialog with the chorus as a whole. He made the choral hymn also more dramatic. After Thespis various innovations were introduced until at the time of Æschylus the construction of a tragedy consisted of a prolog to give the necessary background for the story, the entry of the chorus,

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the dramatic episodes interspersed with the choral odes, and the final scene.

The tragedies were produced in competition for prizes at the festivals of Dionysus under the direction of the authors. Usually three poets competed with three tragedies and a satyr drama. At first the poets themselves trained their choruses and declaimed the dramatic portions of their tragedies. Later the plays were performed by professional actors. In practically every case the plots dealt with myths well known to the audiences. Herodotus tells us that Phrynichus, the immediate predecessor of Æschylus, was fined for producing a play on a recent event, the capture of Miletus by the Persians. The Athenians wanted their drama to be heroic and not realistic, for it was part of a religious festival.

By introducing a second actor Æschylus increased the importance of the dialog. His tragedies generally deal with the punishment meted out by the gods or fate for disobedience or crime. Of his seventy tragedies only seven are extant. *Prometheus Bound* and *Agamemnon* are the most powerful. Prometheus, bound to a rock, is doomed to have his liver devoured each morning by a vulture because he brought fire to men. Courageously he refuses to obey the dictates of Zeus and scorns the vengeance of the ruler of the gods. To Io, also a victim of Zeus, he foretells

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that one of her descendants will free him. A chorus of ocean nymphs expresses sympathy for the hero in his suffering and admiration for his courage. Prometheus's revolt against the tyranny of Zeus appealed to the English poets in the nineteenth century. Mrs. Browning translated the drama, and Shelley wrote *Prometheus Unbound*.

*Agamemnon* is the first drama of a trilogy based on the curse placed on the house of Atreus for various murders. Agamemnon is murdered by his wife Clytemnestra when he returns from the Trojan war. Her motives are revenge, jealousy, and desire for power. Just before sailing Agamemnon had sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to insure fair winds for the fleet. Then he brought back with him the Trojan seeress, Cassandra. While he was at Troy, Clytemnestra had plotted with Ægisthus to usurp the throne. At the conclusion of the tragedy she says, "I and thou, ruling o'er this house, will settle all things rightly." In the last two plays of the trilogy, Orestes avenges his father's death and is pursued by the Furies for the murder of his mother until the curse is removed by the intervention of Athena.

The tragedies of Æschylus are impressive because of the power of their themes and the grandeur of their style. His heroic figures speak in a sonorous style, attained through the use of

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compound words and weighty phrases. Even the lyric passages have this elevated tone. Altho his plots are simple, his treatment gives them unusual significance. When Æschylus began writing, the drama consisted of narrative declamations and choral responses. He developed these into a unified but uncomplicated tragedy.

The development was completed by Sophocles, whose *Œdipus the King* has been called the greatest of all tragedies. Sophocles added a third actor, made the chorus an integral part of the drama, portrayed the characters in more detail, and introduced dramatic irony. For sixty years he won either a first or second prize at the festivals. He wrote over one hundred plays, of which seven remain. Like Æschylus he chose subjects from the myths concerning the ruling families but showed how the members of those families brought about their tragic fates by their actions.

In the *Antigone* the heroine defies the king because she considers his order forbidding the burial of her brother contrary to the divine laws. She is willing to die for what she believes to be right. Creon's refusal to listen to advice until it is too late causes not only Antigone's death but that of his son and his wife. The heroine of *Electra* is another woman of determination. She urges Orestes to avenge the death of Agamemnon. In these two tragedies Sophocles is emi-

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nently successful in the portrayal of contrasting characters.

*Œdipus the King* is the masterpiece of Greek drama because of its flawless construction and dramatic intensity. Œdipus brings his own doom by his relentless search for the murderer of his predecessor. Slowly but surely he discovers the awful truth that he has killed his father and married his mother in accordance with the decree of the oracle. He has tried to escape this fate, but a combination of circumstances has prevented him. His own impulsiveness and pride in his wisdom were his ruin. The dramatic irony in the play consists in the fact that the audience realizes that the curses of Œdipus against the murderer really apply to himself. The tragedy is profound, for at the end the powerful king has become a blind suppliant to Creon, whom he has previously accused in his anger.

The dramas of Euripides, the last great Athenian dramatist in the fifth century B. C., are more modern than those of his predecessors. He presents human passions as the causes of the tragedies instead of divine vengeance or the decrees of fate. He was the first to use the motive of love for the main theme of his plots. Altho his characters were presumably the persons of the Greek legends, they were drawn from the Athenians whom Euripides had observed. They argue in the manner of the sophists and express

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somewhat radical views on politics, philosophy, and religion. Hence the plays of Euripides appealed to his audiences, altho he won few prizes because of his radical opinions. As later writers quoted passages from them to substantiate their opinions, a large number of his characteristic statements have been preserved.

The most striking innovations made by Euripides were the introduction of humor and the use of the happy ending. In *Alcestis*, Hercules furnishes the humor by his remarks after he has had too much to drink. He also brings about the happy ending, for he restores to Admetus his devoted wife who has died in his place. *Iphigenia among the Taurians* also ends happily when the brother and sister are united and escape the dangers besetting them through the intervention of Athena.

In his *Medea*, a drama of jealousy and revenge, Euripides created one of the great tragic heroines of all literature. After ten years Jason deserts Medea for the daughter of the king of Corinth. Medea sends a poisoned robe to the bride and kills her own children in her anger against her faithless husband. The struggle between jealousy and mother love in the passionate heart of the deserted wife is depicted with great dramatic power. The character of Medea has been a challenge as well as an inspiration to many famous actresses.

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For his attitude toward the drama Euripides was criticized in his own day. A satirical comedy by Aristophanes, the *Frogs*, contains a quarrel between Æschylus and Euripides about the claims of each to be the greater poet. The decision is rendered by Dionysus at a trial in Hades, where the god has gone disguised as Hercules to bring back to Athens a tragic poet, who will restore the former glories of the drama. As Aristophanes was a conservative, he treats Euripides harshly and favors Æschylus.

The modern reader finds the plays of Aristophanes difficult to understand because the satire is directed against the customs of his day and the jokes allude to local happenings. Unless a person has an extensive knowledge of Athenian society in the fifth century B. C., he will have to consult explanatory notes continually. Aristophanes ridiculed the philosophers in the *Clouds*, the demagogues in the *Wasps*, and the Athenians and the human race generally in the *Birds*. He names these plays from the choruses dressed in fantastic costumes to suggest strange effects. He often indulged in vulgar jokes and atrocious puns at the expense of his contemporaries. Scurrilous abuse and beatings increased the reality of the conflicts upon which he based his plots. Notwithstanding all his coarseness and willingness to descend to the lowest type of humor to get a laugh from his audience, Aristoph-



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anes could write fine poetry. The graceful songs and hymns for his choruses are evidences of his gift as a lyric poet.

After Aristophanes the comedy of satire became more general in tone and was finally replaced by the New Comedy. The theme was the intrigue on the part of a young man to outwit his father so that he might marry the girl of his choice, who at the conclusion of the play is proved to be the daughter of a respectable citizen altho she has been brought up in servitude. The young man accomplishes his purpose through the aid of a devoted and clever slave. About twenty years ago fragments of plays by Menander were discovered in Egypt. He had long been considered the chief writer of the New Comedy from the references to his plays and the adaptations by the Latin authors. Through these adaptations Menander's comedies exerted considerable influence on Molière and Shakespeare.

Before Plautus began to adapt the plays of the New Comedy to meet the demands of a Roman audience, he had been a stage carpenter and actor. Therefore, he knew that the spectators wished primarily to be amused. He filled his comedies with exaggerated characters, rough humor, plenty of action, spirited dialog, and allusions to Roman customs. His loosely constructed plots deal with the discomfiture of an unattrac-

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tive character like Euclio, the miser in the *Pot of Gold*, the fooling of an unsuspecting father as in *The Haunted House*, or the complications arising from misunderstandings such as those of twins in the *Menæchmi*. This last play is the source for Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. The comedies of Plautus seem extremely artificial because of the speeches addressed to the audience, the overheard conversations, the asides, and the soliloquies. The actors are apparently taking the audience into their confidence and explaining their thoughts so that no one may be in doubt concerning their motives. It must have been as easy to follow a play by Plautus as it is to watch a motion-picture comedy.

Terence, on the other hand, did not cater to the vulgar taste of the average theater-goer in his day, but wrote to please the minority, for whom clever wit and excellent characterization were more entertaining than coarse farces. His contemporaries accused him of plagiarism because he followed very closely his Greek sources. They also compared him with Plautus and criticized his method of combining plays written by Menander. Terence's plots are monotonous, for with one exception they are based on a recognition scene. Another favorite device was the use of pairs of lovers whose destinies were intertwined. Terence was most successful when he was able to present contrasting characters. *The*

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*Brothers* shows the results of two opposite systems of rearing boys. As neither system is entirely successful, several amusing situations arise. Altho Terence's plots are simple, his characters are so cleverly drawn that he has been imitated by many European dramatists.

The Romans went to the theater to be amused and not to be reminded that disobedience of divine laws is inevitably punished. Therefore, few tragedies were ever performed. The students of Greek literature did, however, try to imitate the great Athenian dramatists. The chief of these imitators was the philosopher Seneca, who used tragedy to teach the Stoic principles of endurance. His nine plays are declamatory and argumentative without dramatic action. They are filled with horrors, which undoubtedly pleased the court of Nero but which disgust the modern reader. Their characters are artificial types talking like philosophers or orators. Yet these tragedies are supremely important in the history of drama as the source for the early Elizabethan drama in England and the classical drama in France. Shakespeare expressed the general attitude toward them in the speech of Polonius about the ability of the Players in *Hamlet*. "Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and liberty, these are the only men."

During the Roman Empire the gladiatorial

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combats and the spectacular exhibitions in the Colosseum superseded the drama. The Roman populace preferred to see the Christians devoured by wild beasts or to hear the groans of the dying gladiators. The emperors spent fortunes and lives of numerous slaves to furnish magnificent spectacles for the entertainment of their followers. When the church became the dominating power in Europe, all performances were forbidden on account of their brutality. For nearly one thousand years the drama disappeared from European literature.

## XXI

### THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

ALTHO the great revival of the drama came toward the end of the fifteenth century, the beginnings of a renewed interest in dramatic presentations appeared several centuries earlier. About the year 1000 an English monk named Ælfric wrote a book to teach his pupils to speak Latin. It is in the form of a dialog between the teacher and the various members of the class. He asks each one questions about his occupation and comments on the answers. The English words were placed over the Latin in the form of an interlinear translation. Probably this method of instruction was frequently used to impress the lessons more firmly upon the young men's minds.

The church also employed the drama to present more vividly its teachings. The mass is a three-act drama, with the priests, choir, and congregation all taking part. The section from the Processional to the Halleluia forms the first part; from the reciting of the Creed to the Adoration of the Host is the second; while the concluding act consists of the remaining portion from the Agnus Dei to the Benediction. On special days, particularly Easter and Christmas,

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the priests enacted a brief dramatization of an appropriate scene from the narratives in the Gospels, such as the appearance of the angel to the women at the sepulcher of Christ. Later other stories from both the Old and New Testaments were dramatized until a cycle from the creation to the last judgment had been completed. These plays based upon biblical material are called mysteries. Another group recounting marvelous incidents in the lives of the saints are known as miracles.

At first the clergy produced the mysteries within the church or in the churchyard, but when they began to introduce comic elements, like the argument between Noah and his wife, the bishop stopped the performances. Then the guilds, the medieval trade associations, took over the production of the plays. At the Corpus Christi festival each guild would give the mystery most appropriate for its trade. For example, the shepherds presented the Christmas play, and the watermen were assigned the flood. From the account-books of the guilds we have learned the details of these presentations and the cost of the various items. In England the stage was a movable platform, which was drawn from place to place through the town so that everyone might have an opportunity to see the play. On the Continent, however, it was customary to erect a stage in the market-place.

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The great majority of the mysteries and miracles did not have a unified plot; they were merely a visual representation of loosely connected narratives. Sometimes the author would interpolate an episode from contemporary life. Finally an unknown author in the fourteenth century had the temerity to reduce the biblical episode to one concluding scene and to write a realistic comedy of English life. *The Second Shepherd's Play* opens with a discussion concerning the hardships endured by shepherds. This scene is a preparation for the ensuing ones, in which a thief steals a lamb and almost fools the shepherds by a clever trick but is finally caught and tossed in a blanket by way of punishment. This little play is a merry farce with several moments of dramatic suspense.

In the fifteenth century the morality play became very popular. The characters of the moralities are abstractions representing the seven deadly sins and the seven cardinal virtues. These fight for the soul of man by tempting him to sin or encouraging him to do good deeds. The moralities were written to instruct the people in the doctrines of the church and to warn them against evil. *Everyman*, recently revived for a few performances, emphasizes very strongly the danger of forsaking good deeds for worldly pleasures.

After the humanists of the Renaissance dis-

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covered the comedies of Plautus and Terence and the tragedies of Seneca, the construction of the drama was modified by the imitation of these classical models. The subjects, however, were still to a large extent native. The first English comedy, *Ralph Royster Doyster*, is an adaptation of the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus. It was written by Nicholas Udall for his pupils at Eton. A more thoroughly English comedy is *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, a coarse farce concerning the search for a needle lost while Gammer was mending the breeches of her hired man, Hodge. It gives a realistic picture of life among the rustic classes.

Tragedy was more dependent than comedy upon the classical models. The first English tragedy, *Gorboduc*, by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, has practically no action. A messenger describes the battles and confusion caused by Gorboduc's dividing his kingdom between his two sons, and a chorus of old men points out the moral lesson to be derived from this unwise action. The purpose of the authors was to show Elizabeth the necessity of marrying and providing England with a royal heir. The fact that *Gorboduc* is written in blank verse and divided into five acts had an important effect upon the further development of English tragedy.



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Between the years 1560 and 1590, the approximate date of Shakespeare's first play, Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, Robert Greene, and Christopher Marlowe were writing new plays or revising old ones for audiences desiring thrilling spectacles or amusing situations. These men prepared the way for Shakespeare. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* is a melodrama of violent passions leading to numerous murders. Lyly wrote witty court comedies of a somewhat fanciful nature, such as *Endymion*, a graceful compliment to Elizabeth. Greene, on the other hand, took his material and characters from country life. The subplot of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* consists of a romantic love story. Because he introduced the love motive in his plays, Greene has been called the founder of romantic comedy.

The most talented of Shakespeare's predecessors was Christopher Marlowe. Educated at Cambridge, he was inspired by the ideas of the Renaissance to seek all knowledge. Like his Faust, however, he indulged in the pleasures of the tavern, where he was killed in a quarrel at the age of twenty-nine. In a few years he accomplished more toward the enrichment of English drama than all his contemporaries. At this period even Shakespeare was writing very indifferent plays. It was Marlowe's "mighty line" that raised his tragedies above the general level. Such verses as the following addressed by Faust

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to Helen show his unsurpassed command of blank verse:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?  
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

Each one of Marlowe's heroes strives to attain power through a different means. *Tamburlaine* is the story of the great Tartar seeking power by conquering the rulers of the earth and even defying the gods in his pride. *The Jew of Malta* depicts the tortures inflicted by Barabas upon his victims in his mad lust for riches. This tragedy of horrors reveals most clearly Marlowe's chief fault—weakness in characterization. From the point of dramatic construction *Edward II*, a study of a king's struggle against circumstances, is the best of his plays. But the theme and poetic grandeur of *Faustus* have gained it a higher place among the great English tragedies in spite of its faulty construction.

Dissatisfied with the inadequacy of the knowledge he has obtained from his studies, Faust sells his soul to the devil in return for twenty-four years of absolute power. The experiences of these years, when the magic of Mephistophilis is at the service of Faust, are recounted in the drama. At the end he prays for one more day to repent, but is carried off to hell by the devils amid thunder and lightning as he cries:

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My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!  
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!  
Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!  
I'll burn my books!—Ah, Mephistophilis!

While Marlowe was writing his splendid lines, a young man from Stratford-on-Avon was learning the ways of the theater. He had probably been the despair of his father, a prosperous tradesman, because he preferred wandering along the banks of the Avon and through the woods and fields to settling down in any steady occupation. Furthermore, at eighteen he had married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer from a neighboring village. In order to support his increasing family Shakespeare may have joined one of the traveling companies of actors which gave performances in Stratford. At any rate he became a member of Burbage's company in London.

Altho he played minor rôles during his whole association with the theater, his work as an actor was supplementary to his duties as one of the playwrights of the company. At first he rewrote the old plays in the repertory, often collaborating with others. He vitalized their plots and gave life to their wooden characters. In a short time he was writing original plays based on stories he had read in histories or romances. He invented practically none of his plots, but combined incidents taken from several sources. Many

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of these plots are highly improbable and sometimes weakly developed. We must remember, however, that Shakespeare was writing for the entertainment of an uncritical audience and not for the analysis of the trained scholar. That his plots hold the attention of all classes has been proved by three hundred years of performances in Europe and America.

Shakespeare's greatness lies in his unsurpassed ability in characterization and in his power of poetic expression. He understood equally well how to portray the emotions of a crafty villain, a half-wit clown, a jealous husband, a melancholy youth, an innocent girl, or an amorous queen. As a play progresses, the characters reveal themselves in word and action. They suffer on account of tragic faults or comic weaknesses. The obstinate pride of Lear and Cordelia, the misdirected ambition of Macbeth, the suspicious jealousy of Othello, the impetuous anger of Romeo, and the intellectual preoccupation of Hamlet are the underlying causes of the five great tragedies. Altho the outcome in the comedies depends more upon situation, almost every one of them has several attractive or absorbing characters, among whom are the clever Portia, the pathetic Shylock, the shrewd Catherine, the blustering Petruchio, and the simple Touchstone. The reader marvels at the variety and individuality of the scores of persons Shakespeare has

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created. If he had drawn but one of them, the engaging Falstaff, his fame would be secure. The fat knight is the greatest comic character in the whole realm of literature. It is said that Elizabeth was so charmed with his rogueries in *Henry IV* that she ordered Shakespeare to write a play showing Sir John in love. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* provided him with two simultaneous affairs, much to his discomfiture. Every time one rereads a play by Shakespeare, he realizes more fully how great was the dramatist's mastery of characterization, for each rereading reveals new traits. He was ever a student of human nature in all its phases, finding man an inexhaustible subject. Hamlet expresses his creator's view of that subject in a conversation with Rosencrantz:

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!

The number of familiar quotations from the plays is a testimony to the effectiveness of Shakespeare's expression. No other author has stated so well the thoughts and feelings common to humanity. By his magnificent figures of speech he has impressed his ideas indelibly upon the mind of the reader. Even his weakest plays contain passages of poetic beauty. Yet at times

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Shakespeare wrote very bad verses. He had the faults common to the poets of the age, who were fond of puns and elaborate diction. That he was able to break away from these tendencies marks him as the individual genius of the Elizabethan period. According to Ben Jonson, "He was not of an age, but for all time!"

Our admiration for Shakespeare's poetry often causes us to forget that he was a practical man of the theater. His plays won him financial success because he gave the Elizabethan public what they wanted. He invested his income shrewdly and soon became the most prominent stockholder in the Globe and Blackfriars theaters. By 1597 he had made enough money to purchase New Place, the finest house in Stratford. Fourteen years later he retired to spend the rest of his life as a country gentleman. He seems to have been entirely indifferent to the fate of his plays, for he took no steps to publish them during these years of leisure at Stratford.

In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, two actors of the Blackfriars company, John Heming and Henry Condell, compiled the *First Folio* from the manuscripts in the possession of the company. They included thirty-six plays, omitting *Pericles*. Their purpose was "to keepe the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive" by providing an edition more accurate

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than the "divers stolen and surreptitious copies" printed from players' books or from stenographic notes taken down during a performance. Unfortunately, they were not so accurate as they asserted, but they deserve our gratitude for collecting the plays. The *First Folio* is the most valuable book in the English language.

About seventy-five years ago, a small group of skeptics questioned the ability of a comparatively uneducated youth from Stratford to write plays revealing such profound and varied knowledge. They also noted that the references to Shakespeare in the literature and documents of the time were very few. Surely, they argued, he should have received recognition in an age so enthusiastic about literature. Hence they concluded that the plays were the work of the most learned philosopher of the day, Francis Bacon. The Baconians have gone to all extremes to prove their theory. The reader who has come under the spell of Shakespeare's magic verse, however, cares little for their arguments. For him the tribute in Milton's sonnet is final:

What needs my Shakespeare, for his honored bones,  
The labor of an age in piléd stones?  
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid  
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?  
Dear son of Memory, great heir of Fame,  
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?  
Thou, in our wonder and astonishment  
Hast built thyself a livelong monument.

## THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

The work of Shakespeare has overshadowed that of the other Elizabethan dramatists. Charles Lamb endeavored to arouse interest in them by his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, and in the present century Professor Neilson has given us their best plays in *The Chief Elizabethan Dramatists*. The leader among these writers, who were accustomed to meet at the Mermaid Tavern, was Ben Jonson, the poet laureate of the court of James I. He was well versed in the classical tradition, as his tragedies, *Sejanus* and *Catiline*, show. In the *Poetaster* he imitated very convincingly the style of the Roman poets, but satirized very cleverly two of his contemporaries.

His humour plays were also written in this satiric vein. The term humour signified some mood or ridiculous trait which was characteristic of a social type. *Volpone*, or *The Fox* satirizes the miser; *Epicæne*, or *The Silent Woman* tells how Morose, who cannot bear the least noise, is tricked by his disinherited nephew; the *Alchemist* ridicules the propensity to seek advice from quacks; and *Every Man in His Humour* hits almost every fault of society. As human nature changes little from age to age, Jonson's characters are surprizingly modern.

Jonson also wrote masques for the expensive entertainments of the court. The masque was an elaborate combination of dancing, singing, in-



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strumental music, and spectacular effects. It was somewhat like a modern operetta. Since the emphasis was placed upon the settings and music, the plots were very slight. Inigo Jones designed the effects for Jonson's productions, costing thousands of dollars. Some of the songs from the masques should appear more often on concert programs, for they are most charming.

Two of Jonson's friends of the Mermaid Tavern belonged to wealthy families. They were Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, who collaborated in writing about forty plays. The plots are ingenious and complicated, but theatrically effective because of the dramatic suspense. Furthermore, their noble ladies and gentlemen converse naturally. *Philaster* and *The Maid's Tragedy* are romantic dramas of faithless love. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is a clever comedy about the adventures of a grocer's boy given a part in a play at the request of a citizen and his wife, who have objected to the play scheduled for that performance. It is supposed to be the type of entertainment desired by a London audience in the early seventeenth century. The hero, of course, triumphs over many obstacles by his courageous and noble actions.

Other Elizabethan dramatists have been remembered for one or two plays. George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois*, a tragedy of bloodshed, has some fine lines, but is too heavy. Thomas

## THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

Dekker wrote a merry comedy about London life in the *Shoemaker's Holiday*, and Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* is a pathetic story of domestic life, showing considerable ability to portray emotions. A similar understanding of every-day life is evident in Thomas Middleton's *The Changeling* and *A Trick to Catch the Old One*. Another comedy, which has provided actors with a favorite part, Sir Giles Overreach, is Philip Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. Finally, John Webster closed the series of great blood-and-thunder tragedies with his *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. The latter play, dealing with the horrors of Italian intrigue in the sixteenth century, contains several powerful scenes.

The passionate scenes of the tragedies and the coarseness of the comedies written by the later Elizabethans aroused the antagonism of the Puritans. Furthermore, the dramatists had frequently ridiculed their beliefs. Therefore, when the Puritans came into power, they forbade public performances. In 1642 the Elizabethan drama came to an end. The troublous years of the Commonwealth were unfavorable to the drama, altho a few private performances were given. When the theaters reopened after the restoration of Charles II, the Elizabethan drama seemed too crude to a monarch who had spent his exile in France.

## XXII

### REVIVAL OF THE DRAMA IN SPAIN AND FRANCE

THE English imitations of the classical drama were relatively unimportant in comparison with the national drama. Some of the Elizabethans constructed plays according to the rules of the three unities, but the majority refused to restrict the action to one theme, the scene to one place, and the time to one day. In Spain a similar revolt against the classical rules occurred. The French dramatists of the seventeenth century, however, followed them much more closely. The French critics, led by Boileau, proclaimed that the rules should never be disregarded.

The love of the Spanish people for romances, ridiculed by Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, influenced the development of the drama. They wanted plays of incidents and not character studies. Lope de Vega, the founder of the Spanish romantic drama in the fifteenth century, blamed this attitude of the Spanish people for his disregard of the classical methods. Like Shakespeare, he wrote to please his audience, "for since the crowd pays for the comedies, it is fitting to talk foolishly to it to satisfy its taste."

## REVIVAL OF THE DRAMA

With amazing rapidity de Vega produced over fifteen hundred plays, many of which were comedies of political intrigue. Wonderful escapes from impending dangers held the spectators spellbound. The heroes in these sword-and-cloak comedies defended their personal or family honor against the threats of church and state. In ornate diction they voiced their noble sentiments. The humor was furnished by the comic servant, who was usually the confidant of his master. The scenes of the three acts took place in palaces, prisons, streets, or any locality favorable for exciting experiences. That there were few dull moments the readers of *The Star of Seville* well know.

De Vega's own life was almost as adventurous as those of his heroes. He ran away from school, was a soldier in the Armada, carried on numerous love-affairs, and finally entered the priesthood. His popularity was so great that when he died the ceremonies in connection with his funeral lasted for two weeks.

His successor was Pedro Calderón de la Barca. Often Calderón borrowed material from his predecessors but enhanced its dramatic possibilities. He was essentially melodramatic in his treatment of the honor motive, disregarding probability to gain effectiveness. His skill in developing tense situations has been praised by eminent writers in every European literature. Goethe

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told Eckermann that Calderón's "plays are thoroughly stage-perfect; there is never a feature in them which is not designed to produce a certain calculated effect."

Besides the tragedies of jealousy, the comedies of intrigue, and the historical dramas, Calderón wrote about seventy religious plays after he became a priest. These plays, called *autos sacramentales*, were allegorical representations in one act to be performed on Corpus Christi day. The genius of Calderón was particularly adapted to this type, of which *The Divine Orpheus* is an excellent example. From his other dramatic works *The Devotion of the Cross*, *Life Is a Dream*, *The Mighty Magician*, and *The Constant Prince* might be chosen as representative. After Calderón, the Spanish drama has been of little importance in European literature until the present century.

A contemporary of de Vega and Calderón furnished Pierre Corneille with the subject of his masterpiece, *The Cid*. Guillen de Castro had dramatized the main events of the Spanish chronicle in his *Youthful Adventures of the Cid*, produced at Madrid about twenty years before Corneille's famous play aroused among the literary leaders of Paris a heated discussion concerning the three unities. As a result of that discussion Corneille adhered thereafter strictly to the rules and became the founder of the

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French classical tragedy. It is certain that at times he felt the restrictions of the classical form, but he was not inclined to oppose the authority of the French Academy.

From Roman history Corneille took the characters of his greatest tragedies, *Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte*. These characters struggle in terrific conflicts of passion against reason, asserting their indomitable wills. They bear their misfortunes with nobility and oppose fate with assurance. Since the conflicts are psychological, they do little but argue at great length in the Senecan manner. Corneille provided them with some of the most magnificent verses in the French language for these arguments. The dignity and power of his poetry are most suitable for the expression of the exalted ideals which formed the basis of his tragedies.

Corneille's younger rival, Jean Racine, also chose classical or biblical subjects for his tragedies. *Bérénice*, *Phèdre*, and *Athalie* are the best examples of his method of presenting the passions which hold sway in the feminine heart. His characters are types rather than individuals, but they are intensely human in their submission to love and jealousy.

Racine's chief faults are monotony and artificiality. His analytical treatment seems too logical and cold-blooded in its mechanical perfection. His style also reflects this strife for perfection,

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for he sought to make the Alexandrine meter—rimed verses of twelve syllables—as smooth and polished as possible. Racine's position in French literature depends largely upon the beauty of his versification as well as upon his careful workmanship.

French classical tragedy is limited in its appeal because of its inherent qualities. It is difficult to appreciate in a translation the grandeur of Corneille's verses or the elegance of Racine's Alexandrines. Everyone, however, can enjoy the comedies of Jean Baptiste Poquelin, known after he turned from the law to the theater as Molière. This master of satiric comedy learned his trade during a thirteen-years' tour through the provinces with a troupe of strolling actors. When he returned to Paris in 1658, he was recognized as the principal comic actor of the day and a promising dramatist. He became a favorite at the court of Louis XIV, where his plays, ranging from the broadest farce to the most polished comedy, brought him enormous popularity. His famous satires, *Les Précieuses Ridicules* (*The Affected Young Ladies*), *Tartuffe*, *Le Misanthrope*, *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* (*The Doctor in Spite of Himself*), *L'Avare* (*The Miser*), *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (*The Tradesman Turned Gentleman*), *Les Femmes Savantes* (*The Learned Ladies*), and *Le Malade Imaginaire* (*The Imaginary Invalid*), attacked the follies, vanities, hy-

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pocrisies, and affectations of contemporary society. Each character is so ruled by some passion that he becomes ridiculous in his subservience to it. The titles just given suggest the chief objects of his wit.

Even his farces have the underlying purpose of pointing out some absurdity. Altho his characters are types of seventeenth-century France, they are universal in their various attitudes toward life. Pretense and vanity are as common in twentieth-century America as in the France of Louis XIV. That is why Molière is readable and actable to-day. His fertile imagination, accurate observation, and witty dialog have kept perennially fresh this "greatest comic writer of all the world."

In the next century Voltaire wrote several classical tragedies of considerable ingenuity, and Lesage produced two comedies in the manner of Molière, besides his vaudevilles and operettas. One other French dramatist of the eighteenth century has been remembered largely because his witty comedies, the *Barbier de Seville* and the *Mariage de Figaro*, supplied Rossini and Mozart with librettos for their immortal operas. The Figaro of Beaumarchais has thus outlived his political significance. The French drama, however, was generally at a low level until the romantic revival under Hugo.



## XXIII

### THE RESTORATION DRAMA

WHEN Charles II returned from his exile in France, he established a court modeled upon that of Paris. Freed from the restraint of Puritanism, the drama flourished with renewed vigor. The King had licensed two theaters, which were supported by the fashionable court. Boys no longer played the feminine parts as in the Elizabethan theater. From the diary of that inveterate playgoer, Samuel Pepys, we learn many details about the performances from comments on the admirable acting of the famous Nell Gwyn to the price of seats in the pit. He seldom failed to mention the prominent people in the boxes.

The Elizabethan tragedies did not meet the approval of this court audience trained to appreciate the dramas of Corneille and Racine. Hence they were rewritten so that they would conform to the three unities. This mixture of Elizabethan tragedy and French classical drama is called the heroic play. John Dryden was the most prominent writer of this type of drama. He wrote for the theater only when he needed money, for he did not feel himself especially fitted for dramatic writing. But it offered the

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highest remuneration in the early days of the Restoration.

His heroic plays are so filled with dramatic wonders that Dr. Johnson said that in them the "ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing." The theme is a struggle between love and honor. Sometimes the hero, possessing rare courage, is united to the heroine, but more often he commits suicide to save his honor. Unfortunately, he waits until he has had an opportunity to rant at great length about his misfortunes. The speeches are very artificial because they are written in the rimed heroic couplet, which Dryden thought gave the effect of the French Alexandrine. He used blank verse, however, for his best play, *All for Love*. The titles of his heroic plays suggest their exalted nature, for example, *The Conquest of Granada*, *Aureng-Zebe*, *The Spanish Friar*, *The Maiden Queen*.

Restoration Comedy aimed to please sophisticated London society. Hence it was immoral and cynical in tone. Virtue was ridiculed as hypocritical, while clever intrigue was advocated as the means of gaining social prestige. The promiscuous philanderings of witty gentlemen and beautiful ladies were the basis of the complicated plots. Mirabell and Millamant in William Congreve's *Way of the World* are the finest characterizations in Restoration Comedy. His brilliant dialog in this play and in *All for Love* is

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as entertaining as that of Molière. From Congreve's one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, comes the line, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast."

Within the last decade several Restoration comedies have been revived with some success in New York and London. A modern audience, undisturbed by their vulgarity or frankness, finds the situations very amusing. Besides Congreve's plays, *The Country Wife* by William Wycherley and *The Beaux' Stratagem* by George Farquhar are worthy of mention.

By the end of the seventeenth century the comedy of intrigue had fallen into disrepute. The pleasure-loving Stuarts had lost the throne through the revolution of 1688 because of the arbitrary measures of James II. The more sober court of William of Orange repudiated completely the French influence. In 1698 Jeremy Collier published his *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the Stage*, in which he criticized the drama for rewarding vice and ridiculing virtue. Congreve and others answered this attack, but the taste of the time was demanding a reformation in the drama. Clever comedy and classical tragedy no longer attracted the theatergoer.

## XXIV

### THE DRAMA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THE appeal of the seventeenth-century drama is primarily intellectual. We watch with interest how the characters solve their difficulties, escape their predicaments, or succumb to their fates, but we do not sympathize with them. Not until the drama was entirely freed from the dominance of the classical rules, did it appeal to the emotions. When a dramatist is chiefly concerned with construction, he tends toward artificiality. His characters act according to theories and not according to nature. No human being ever spoke the heroic couplets of Dryden or the witty lines of Congreve. Even Molière's characters are too one-sided to be entirely convincing.

The first step toward a more natural drama was the sentimental comedy. It was natural only in the sincere distress of the misjudged heroine and in the ordinary conversation of the dialog. The plots were based upon a misunderstanding which a simple question might have cleared up, but this question was never asked until the last minute. Then in the acceptable fashion of melodrama or the touching romances of the

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screen, the villain was foiled, and everybody else restored to happiness. The audience, moved to tears by the pathetic situations during the course of the play, rejoiced that virtue and honesty triumphed at the conclusion. Richard Steele's *The Tender Husband* and *The Conscious Lovers* made the sentimental comedy popular at the Drury Lane Theater. They pleased the spectators not only by their emotional scenes but also by their moral purposes.

Another kind of entertainment very popular in the early eighteenth century was the Italian opera, discussed so humorously in the *Spectator*. John Gay burlesqued this importation in *The Beggar's Opera*. Instead of pastoral scenes and characters from classical mythology, Gay presented Newgate prison and the members of London's lower classes. Altho the satire of *The Beggar's Opera* is hardly evident after two hundred years, Captain Macheath, Polly Peachum, and their associates have proved real enough to pack a London theater for over a year. Gay made a distinct advance toward realistic comedy by these burlesques.

With the production of *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1773, Oliver Goldsmith took the final step by giving the English stage its first truly natural drama since the Elizabethan period. He revolted against the pathos of the sentimental drama as well as the artificiality of the comedy of in-

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trigue. He believed that comedy should be funny and that it should make vice ridiculous. *She Stoops to Conquer* has been criticized for its horse-play and for its improbabilities. The horse-play, however, consists of just the kind of practical jokes Tony Lumpkin would devise. As for the improbabilities, Goldsmith once mistook the manor house of Edgeworthstown for an inn. And what young lady would not impersonate a barmaid to obtain a husband?

The comedy of manners reached its highest development in *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* by Richard Brinsley Sheridan. As a member of a distinguished family Sheridan was well acquainted with the artificialities of society. His love affair with the beautiful Elizabeth Lindley, a famous prima donna, might have furnished him with the material for a successful comedy, for it was most exciting. After their marriage the Sheridans entertained extensively and gathered in their drawing-rooms the political leaders. Soon Sheridan entered Parliament, where he made several important speeches.

At the same time he was writing plays for the Drury Lane Theater, which he had owned since he was twenty-five years old. He portrayed in an unforgettable manner the sentimental heroine, the hypocritical dandy, the blustering father, the pedantic matron, the good-natured prodigal, and the scandal club of fashionable society. The

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names of these characters indicate their prominent traits: Lydia Languish, Sir Anthony Absolute, Bob Acres, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Charles Surface, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, and Lady Teazle. But the masterpiece of that entertaining company is that "old weather-beaten she-dragon," Mrs. Malaprop, whose delightful misuse of the English language has added a new word to it—"malapropism." Perhaps these characters are too consistent in their devotion to their frivolous aims, but for sheer brilliance the comedies of Sheridan have never been surpassed in English literature. Macaulay described *The Rivals* as "an universal glare of brilliancy."

Sheridan's experience in producing plays taught him the value of dramatic suspense. The auction scene and the screen scene in *The School for Scandal* show his ability to handle a complicated situation with exceptional ease. This facility increased the dramatic effectiveness of *The Critic*, a satire of the sentimental drama. By clever distortions of the stock characters and noble sentiments of these plays, Sheridan ridiculed their absurdities. His sparkling dialog has, however, more than any other of his admirable qualities, given his comedies their lasting humor.

In Italy the chief writer of the light comedy of society was Carlo Goldoni. For several years he provided the Venetian theater with lively

## DRAMA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

pièces depicting native life. His devotion to Molière is evident in these comedies, altho he was more than a servile imitator. The last years of his life he spent in Paris, where he wrote several plays in French. Recently the Civic Repertory Theater revived in New York his *La Locandiera* (*The Mistress of the Inn*). The delightful Mirandolina plays many merry pranks on her numerous admirers and never loses control of the situation. Goldoni's ingenuity in constructing such plots has won him much praise.

Molière was also the model for the Danish dramatist, Ludwig Holberg, whose travels in England, France, and Italy gave him an international point of view. He rescued Scandinavian literature from a too-narrow classicism by departing from the general custom of writing in Latin. He thereby established the Danish language as a medium for literary expression. His writings had been mainly historical and poetic before 1722, when he was appointed manager of the new theater at Copenhagen. Since there were no plays in Danish, Holberg became a dramatist in order to provide comedies for his company. In these comedies he ridiculed pretense and adherence to foreign customs. His plots are simple; his characters natural; and his action swift. On account of its influence on Lessing, *Erasmus Montanus* is Holberg's most important play. *Witchcraft* and *The 11th of June*, however, are



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still popular in the Danish theater. The American Scandinavian Foundation has made his plays available in an English translation.

The last half of the eighteenth century was the golden age of German drama under the leadership of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller. With *Miss Sarah Sampson*, a tragedy of middle class life, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing inaugurated the national drama. He freed the German theater from the classical restraint of Corneille and Racine, not only by such plays as *Minna von Barnhelm* and *Nathan the Wise*, but also by his critical essays in the *Hamburg Dramaturgy*. He took for his models Sophocles and Shakespeare rather than the French classicists. Altho his characters are somewhat conventional, they are drawn from life. As he considered the stage a moral influence, his plays emphasized a social lesson. This is especially true of *Nathan the Wise*, with its teachings of toleration and brotherly love. Often his social dramas are sentimental and commonplace, but he proved that in contemporary German life there were materials for both comedy and tragedy.

The revolt started by Lessing developed into the *Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Stress*) movement, so named from the title of a play by a younger dramatist. One of the main characteristics of this movement was the admiration for Shakespeare's freedom in the treatment of sub-

## DRAMA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

ject-matter. In the Shakespearian manner Goethe wrote *Götz von Berlichingen* concerning the struggle of a fifteenth-century outlaw against the tyranny of Emperor Maximilian. Young Germany hailed this play as a manifesto of the new movement because of its rapid action and vivid scenes. *Egmont* is another historical play, similar in nature to *Götz von Berlichingen*, but with a heroine of the Gretchen type. Goethe's affair with Frau von Stein and his experiences at the court of Weimar were the basis for *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and *Torquato Tasso*, psychological studies of remorse and sensitiveness.

Goethe always had considerable difficulty with the dramatic form of composition, because he lacked the talent for practical playwriting. He disregarded the theatrical effect in his tendency to philosophize. The first part of *Faust* is, therefore, a philosophical poem in a series of short dramatic episodes. Goethe began to think about the Faust legend as a subject before he was twenty-three years of age; he did not finish the drama until he was eighty-three. The theme is man's search for knowledge and contentment of mind. The final triumph of idealism over sensualism teaches that happiness results from doing good for humanity. Faust is essentially a sincere man, who is saved because he "of the right way hath ever consciousness," altho he often sins.

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*Faust* consists of a prelude upon the stage, a prolog in Heaven, a first part in twenty-five scenes, and a five-act drama. In the prolog the Lord gives Mephistopheles permission to tempt Faust, but warns him that he will fail. The drama opens in Faust's study, where he utters his despair at man's misfortune. He turns to a book of magic and summons the Spirit of the Earth. Gaining no enlightenment from this spirit, he is about to commit suicide when the Easter song reminds him of his trusting youth. During a walk through the town with a student, he discovers that he is followed by a poodle. Alone again in his study he is still pondering on his insoluble problem of aiding mankind to attain contentment. Suddenly the poodle turns into Mephistopheles, the cynical and contemptuous devil. Mephistopheles promises Faust every experience, provided that Faust will become his servant hereafter if ever any experience causes Faust to exclaim, "Stay but for a moment." Faust signs the compact with his blood, and Mephistopheles proceeds to initiate him into the pleasures of the world.

The main episode of the first part is the pathetic story of the innocent Gretchen or Marguerite of Gounod's opera. After the death of Gretchen, Faust resides at the emperor's court, becomes the lover of Helen of Troy, assists the emperor in battle, creates a homunculus,

## DRAMA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

visits the scene of the "Walpurgisnacht," and reclaims a section of land from the sea. His plan to make this land a suitable home for mankind brings the satisfaction he has sought. But Mephistopheles loses his wager with the Lord because Faust's contentment came from an action for the good of humanity.

The symbolism in the second part of *Faust* has obscured the grandeur of its poetry. This quality, however, marks the poem as a "world drama," for it deals with the deepest problems of human existence. Goethe's message to the new age was, "He alone deserves liberty, like life, who daily must conquer it." Thus *Faust* states the modern philosophy of action. As an expression of man's striving for perfection it is the most sublime epic-drama in literature.

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller aided Goethe in the management of the theater at Weimar, for which he wrote his historical dramas. When he had been a student in a military school, Schiller had identified himself with the *Sturm und Drang* movement by *The Robbers*, a radical play of revolt, leading to his flight to escape the disciplinary measures of the Duke of Württemberg. It tells how a son flees to the forest from his father's evil court and is opposed by his wicked brother in his attempted reforms. One other play written during this early period before Schiller went to Weimar

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deserves mention. It is *Intrigue and Love*, a tragedy of young love thwarted by political expediency. The horrors of the French Revolution modified Schiller's republican ideas.

The trilogy on Wallenstein—*Wallenstein's Camp*, *The Piccolomini*, and *Wallenstein's Death*—is a study of a sincere man convinced that he is destined to be the leader of Germany during the Thirty Years' War, even tho his desire for position leads to treason. The note of fatality is apparent throughout the tragedy, for Wallenstein feels that his destiny is influenced by the stars. This dependence upon fate elicits our sympathy for him as a tragic hero.

In *The Maid of Orleans* and *William Tell* Schiller again presents characters ruled by a directing destiny. Joan's mission is to drive the usurping English from France and to crown the Dauphin. To this mission she sacrifices human love, finally giving her life to save her country. She is the simple country maiden trusting implicitly in her visions. With similar self-reliance William Tell saves the three forest cantons of Switzerland from the tyranny of the Austrian Gessler.

The aim of Goethe and Schiller to reconcile the Greek idea of art with the modern spirit was the underlying motive in their greatest dramas. It was not until the nineteenth century that the battle for freedom was finally won.

THE DRAMA OF THE ROMANTIC  
REVIVAL

A PROMINENT characteristic of the drama of the romantic revival is the presentation of the moral conflicts within the mind. Usually the heroes are melodramatic in their passionate struggles, for they are most ardent fighters or lovers. In lyrical outbursts they disclose the emotions which sway them. Victor Hugo, the leader of romanticism in France, described the purpose of the romantic drama in the preface to *Cromwell*: "It would lead the audience constantly from sobriety to laughter, from mirthful excitement to heart-breaking emotion." At its best the romantic drama gives us magnificent scenes; at its worst it descends to sentimental melodrama.

The production of Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830 marked the triumph of romanticism on the stage. The subtitle, *Castilian Honor*, suggests its theme, the suicide of a noble Spaniard to uphold his honor. Since he kills himself as he is about to be married to his beloved, the climax is particularly tragic. Hugo's plays are impressive because of their intensity and poetic quality, but they are loosely constructed, with little re-

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gard for probability. They are operative in their grandeur and passion.

For their plots the romanticists often turned to history and legend, because these sources provided colorful incidents. They were seldom strictly accurate in the treatment of fact or the interpretation of character, as they endowed their heroes with their own idealism. Thus Heinrich von Kleist's *Prince of Hamburg* reflects the attitude of the author, who committed suicide when he was thirty-four years old. Prince Friedrich is both a coward and a daring soldier. *Käthchen von Heilbronn* is a drama about medieval knighthood, in which Käthchen saves her lover. She is Kleist's ideal love. In the *Hermannsschlacht* we have his ideal of patriotism expressed through the story of the victor over the Roman Legions commanded by Varus. The historical Arminius becomes in this play the savior of the German people.

Richard Wagner fostered this national spirit in his great *Ring des Nibelungen*, based on medieval legends. Before the composition of the *Ring* he had written three romantic dramas, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*, showing the conflict between the powers of good and evil. By her devotion the faithful Senta releases the Flying Dutchman from the curse of eternal wandering; while the pure Elizabeth saves Tannhäuser from the contamina-

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tion of the Venusberg by her death. In *Lohengrin* the heathen powers are represented by the sinister Ortrud and her husband Friedrich von Telramund, who have accused Elsa von Brabant of murdering her brother. The mysterious Swan Knight appears to be her champion, but departs on their wedding day because, persuaded by Ortrud, she has asked his name. He does, however, defeat the wicked couple by restoring the brother.

The myths of the Teutonic race furnished the material for the dramas of the *Ring*. The theft of the Rhine gold from Alberich the Nibelung brings death to the Volsungs, Siegmund and Siegfried, and finally the *Twilight of the Gods*. Romantic elements, such as the voice of the forest bird and the magic fire surrounding Brunhilde's mountain, are woven into this trilogy of primitive passions. Even the gods cannot control the forces they have set in motion. Their doom is inevitable, for vengeance has been their principal motive. At the conclusion Brunhilde announces the new age with her words, "Let there now be only love."

Tragic fate is the theme of Wagner's greatest drama, *Tristan and Isolde*. In her determination never to wed King Mark, the imperious Isolde has decided to poison herself and Tristan before the ship reaches Cornwall. But her maid disobeys her order, substituting the love potion for the



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poison. In the second act the hopeless lovers are discovered by the king's hunting party, a member of which wounds Tristan. Having returned to his old home in Brittany, Tristan is dying from his wound and his despair when Isolde comes to cure him. In an ecstasy of joy he dies in her arms. The fervor of the lovers, the nobility of Mark, and the faithfulness of Tristan's follower, Kurneval, are the main reasons for the emotional appeal of this great love tragedy. Furthermore, Wagner wrote for this opera his most sublime music. Nothing in the realm of music has surpassed the marvelous pathos of the Love-Death.

*The Mastersingers of Nürnberg* resulted from Wagner's belief in the romantic doctrine that true art was to be found among the people. It is a merry comedy about how a knight gained admission into the guild with the aid of the genial cobbler, Hans Sachs, and won the charming Eva. Wagner's last drama, *Parsifal*, is an interpretation of the Holy Grail legend in terms of religious mysticism.

Wagner's majestic music and his enormous influence upon the opera have been so prominently discussed that few realize his importance in the German drama. Many writers dismiss him with the remark that he belongs to music. His productions at Bayreuth, however, were the source of several reforms in the German theater.

## DRAMA OF THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL

In many respects Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen* is similar to *The Golden Fleece*, a trilogy written about thirty years previously by the Austrian dramatist, Franz Grillparzer. Medea, the central figure in the drama, cannot escape the curse placed upon the Fleece. Continually she strives to subdue her wild spirit after she has yielded to her love for Jason and left her land. At last, after several calamities, she bids Jason farewell and takes the Fleece back to Delphi. The dominant note is one of pessimism. Grillparzer's characters always struggle in vain against external circumstances beyond their control. They must renounce their love, as in *Sappho*, or perish by it, as in *The Waves of Love and of the Sea*, a version of the legend concerning Hero and Leander. Napoleon's failure to accomplish his ambitious plan was the inspiration for *King Ottokar's Fortune and Fall* and *The Dream Is a Life*, altho the first is a historical drama of Bohemia and the second a romantic dream of a country lad. Grillparzer concluded that "the quiet peace of the soul and a breast free of guilt" were more to be desired than the pangs of love or the restlessness of ambition.

The Danish dramatists, Johann Ludwig Heiberg and Henrik Hertz, wrote in accordance with German models but treated their subjects as realistically as possible. Heiberg's *Hill of the Elves* and Hertz's *Svend Dyring's House* are

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national dramas based on ordinary life in the Middle Ages. The majority of their work, however, was composed of comedies and vaudevilles, patterned after those popular on the Parisian stage. In their attacks upon current follies they are decidedly obsolete, however amusing they may have been in their own day.

During the romantic revival, the English theater was distinctly mediocre. The dramas written by the poets were not meant for the stage, while the melodramas written for production were not literature. Occasionally a playwright would rise above the general level with such a play as Dion Boucicault's *London Assurance*. But even the best of these dramas have been forgotten, with the exception of Bulwer-Lytton's *Lady of Lyons* and *Richelieu*. In spite of its very apparent faults *Richelieu* retains its place in the repertory of great actors because the leading part offers several dramatic possibilities.

The remoteness of the historical dramas and the unreality of the melodramas make them extremely theatrical. In subject they are as far removed from life as the classical drama they superseded. Also the characters are either too noble or too wicked to be convincing. Their problems are outside the realm of ordinary experience. Therefore, the romantic drama has held the stage more by the splendor of its emotional climaxes than by its portrayal of life.

## XXVI

### THE MODERN DRAMA

SOME modern dramatists aim to present the experiences of every-day life with no attempt at selection, regardless of the sordidness of detail. They neglect plot, character development, and construction, for they are primarily concerned with showing us life as it is. Others discuss the social and individual problems which have arisen from our complex modern civilization. The drama of ideas has thus assumed a prominent position in contemporary literature. Still others are essentially psychologists analyzing both normal and abnormal types. Another group, descendants of the writers of eighteenth-century comedy, satirizes cleverly the social foibles. A few still follow the method of the romanticists and give us historical dramas or imaginative plays, less melodramatic but yet remote from actual life. Finally there are the symbolists and expressionists, suggesting ideas by unusual methods.

Many dramatists have experimented with several forms, both old and new. They have used choruses in the manner of Greek tragedy and set-backs in the manner of the motion picture. The possibilities offered by modern staging and

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lighting have given them resources hitherto unknown to the drama. Every means for obtaining the effect they desire has been put at their disposal. They have even been assured an audience by such organizations as the Theater Guild. The result has been great activity in the field of the drama, with many interesting plays and a few distinguished ones.

It is customary to say that the modern drama begins with Henrik Ibsen, but before he wrote his social dramas the reaction against romanticism had begun. His direct predecessor is Christian Friedrich Hebbel, whose *Judith*, produced in 1840, stresses the moral conflict in the heroine's soul. While the subject is romantic, the treatment is modern. *Maria Magdalene*, "a tragedy of common life," shows the effect of a young girl's betrayal and suicide upon her proud father. His world crashes when he is faced with reality. *Herodes and Marianne*, *Agnes Bernauer*, and *Gyges and His Ring* are also psychological studies of characters troubled with moral problems. Hebbel's solution invariably leads to death as the means of escape. His dramas are so well planned and so logically developed that they became models for the new German drama.

About the same time Émile Augier, Alexandre Dumas fils, and Victorien Sardou were producing in Paris their satires and studies of society. Augier's *Adventuress*, Dumas's *Camille* and *Le*

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*Demi-Monde*, and Sardou's *Rabagas* are the best examples of the different points of view from which these dramatists analyzed society. Augier upheld honesty and virtue; Dumas discussed ethical problems with unusual frankness; and Sardou ridiculed follies. All of them had an admirable sense of dramatic construction as well as a gift for writing brilliant dialog. Only when they allowed the didactic purpose to predominate, did they fail in dramatic effectiveness.

A study of the French drama taught Ibsen the value of a simple situation and the importance of dialog. From Hebbel he derived his method of presenting human nature and its problems. His purpose was to point out the obstacles which hindered the individual from living his own life in a conventional society. He stated his view in these words: "So to conduct one's life as to realize one's self; this is the loftiest attainment of man." In the conflicts of individuals with conventions he found the material for his social dramas.

Ibsen's work may be divided roughly into two groups, the plays of symbolism and the social dramas. Among the first are *Peer Gynt*, *The Master Builder*, and *The Lady from the Sea*. *Peer Gynt*, a selfish and restless youth, leaves his Norwegian home to seek adventures in the world. At last he returns disillusioned to the waiting Solveig. This fantastic play is a satire

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upon that trait in human nature which finds the distant more attractive than the familiar. Hilda in *The Master Builder* represents the younger generation demanding its kingdom from the older. Ellida in *The Lady from the Sea* desires freedom to determine her choice. At times the symbolism becomes strangely mystical, as in *When We Dead Awaken*. Hence some scenes are extremely bewildering.

The first of the social dramas to bring Ibsen definitely before the European public was *A Doll's House*. This play was widely discussed because the heroine refused to remain shackled by the conventional idea of marriage. Nora leaves her home so that she may have an opportunity to be herself and not remain the mere servant of her unappreciative husband. Ibsen was accused of undermining the foundation of society—the sacredness of marriage—for in 1879 the doctrine that woman's place was in the home was universally accepted. In *Ghosts*, Ibsen answered these attacks by showing the results of Mrs. Alving's remaining in the home with a faithless and dissolute husband. She has bowed to the demands of a conventional morality, but her life has been one long falsehood. The tragic consequences are revealed in the powerful conclusion of the last act.

The wrongness of the majority is pointed out in *An Enemy of the People*. Dr. Stockmann's

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fellow citizens drive him from his home because he has dared to disclose that the baths, to which the town owes its prosperity, are polluted. In a similar manner Ibsen's uncompromising statements of the truth had been attacked. About this play he wrote to the Danish critic Brandes: "I hold that that man is in the right who is most closely in league with the future." He refused to be silent about the evils he observed, regardless of the storms of abuse; for, like Dr. Stockmann, he had discovered that "the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone."

One of Ibsen's greatest dramas belongs to neither group. According to his own story, *Hedda Gabler* is a character play. "What I chiefly tried to do," he said, "was to paint human beings, human emotions, and human fate against a background of some of the conditions and laws of society as it exists to-day." Hedda is the most baffling of his heroines. Some people agree with Bernard Shaw's characterization in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* that she is "mean, envious, insolent." Others think that she was a modern energetic woman condemned to inactivity by the conditions of her time and was consequently misunderstood. At least she was bored with an existence from which she escaped only by suicide. The play concerns her attitude toward those about her and her reactions to her surroundings.



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Ibsen's emphasis on realism and on character affected greatly the development of the modern drama. Dialog became more natural, because the flowery speeches of the romantic drama seemed absurd in comparison with his colloquialisms. The problems of contemporary life and the crises in the lives of ordinary individuals were chosen as the most suitable subjects. Plot was subordinated to a study of character, and often the solution was left to the audience. The drama of ideas replaced the drama of sentiment.

When Ibsen left Norway in 1864, Björnstjerne Björnson succeeded him as director of the theater in Christiania. He had already written a trilogy about Sigurd, the Icelandic hero, and a *Maria Stuart*, in which he showed his tendency to psychological treatment. In his social dramas, such as *The Editor*, *A Bankruptcy*, *Leonarda*, and *The New System*, he preached moderation and restraint. His political activity for an independent and reformed Norway is also reflected in these plays. The comedies of domestic life, particularly *The Newly-Married*, were very popular because of his sympathetic humor.

The Swedish dramatist August Strindberg had no sympathy for his characters. He said: "I wear no rosy glasses and drink no sugared water. I draw my people as they are, and if they emerge as swindlers, hypocrites, and smug citizens, it is their own fault." Half insane, he

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believed that everyone was conspiring against him. In his dramas he poured out his violent hatred of mankind. *The Father* and *The Dance of Death* are very powerful in their terrible realism and sincerity.

The literary revival during the last part of the nineteenth century in Germany brought success to two dramatists of more than national significance. These were Hermann Sudermann and Gerhart Hauptmann. Altho Sudermann wrote the majority of his plays during the twentieth century, his first successes, particularly *Honor, Magda*, and *The Vale of Content*, written before he was forty, are his more profound work. He seemed to be out of touch with the newer ideas. Three great actresses, Modjeska, Bernhardt, and Duse, interpreted *Magda*, a daughter who, returning to her home after a long absence, finds she has outgrown it. His characters are drawn from accurate observation and depicted with admirable clearness.

The heroes and heroines of Hauptmann's realistic plays, *Lonely Lives*, *The Weavers*, *Drayman Henschel*, and *Rose Bernd* suffer from circumstances beyond their control. They are the victims of a social system or a thoughtless action, which has placed them in an uncongenial position. His figures all have a definite personality. Hauptmann also wrote a poetic drama, *The Sunken Bell*, on the folk-tale of the

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bellfounder under the spell of the nymph, Rautendelein. After his bell sinks in the lake, he leaves the world for the mountain home of the fauns and elves. But the tones of the bell, representing the voice of his conscience, recall him. The theme of the drama is thus Heinrich's struggle between his desire and his duty.

The symbolism of the writers of the expressionist school is far more difficult to comprehend and often very confusing. Their dramas are a succession of scenes, revealing more or less clearly the impression made upon persons by their experiences. They endeavor to express states of mind and to indicate the inner meaning of life. Examples of these dramas are Georg Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight*, Ernst Toller's *Man and the Masses*, and Franz Werfel's *The Goat Song*, produced in America by the Theater Guild.

In Austria, Arthur Schnitzler has subtly depicted the disillusioned society of Vienna in such plays as *Light o'Love* and *The Lonely Way*. He is somewhat given to the discussion of morbid problems. Another Austrian dramatist of talent, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, is known primarily as the librettist for *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Electra*, and other operas by Richard Strauss. In his poetic imagery he is a descendant of the romantics.

The Theater Guild has introduced to American audiences two other contemporary dramatists

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of Central Europe, the Czecho-Slovakian Karel Capek and the Hungarian Ferenc Molnar. Capek's imaginative *R. U. R.* and fantastic *The World We Live In* are indictments of a mechanistic and scientific age. He suggests that in our eagerness to gain efficiency we neglect the element of human understanding. Even the robots, mechanical workers, are not so completely mechanical that they can be absolutely controlled. The machine may turn against its creator.

Molnar once told a visitor that he is "first and foremost a journalist." That statement accounts for his penetrating observation and feeling for dramatic situations. He has sought material in fashionable society, in artistic circles, or in the slums. Since he allows the characters to control the story, they reveal their motives by their actions. In *The Guardsman* the hero, pretending to be some one else, courts his own wife. *Liliom*, *The Swan*, and *The Play's the Thing* have equally effective situations, for Molnar is theatrically minded. His first purpose is to entertain, but underlying the entertainment is a vein of genial satire.

Modern Russian drama is so closely associated with the Moscow Art Theater that it is necessary to understand the aims of this organization for an appreciation of Russian dramatic literature. Every member of the company is vitally inter-

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ested in giving an accurate interpretation of the author's meaning. There are no stars. An actor may play a minor rôle one night and the principal rôle the next. All their efforts are directed toward presenting a complete illusion of reality. The spectator is not conscious of the fact that he is in a theater, for he sees perfectly natural action upon the stage. Great emphasis is placed upon detail to secure this effect. Hence modern Russian drama is intensely realistic.

When the Moscow Art Theater produced Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* in 1898, they saved for the drama one of its greatest writers. Chekhov had vowed never to write another play after the failure of *The Seagull* at the State Theater of St. Petersburg. Inspired by the intelligent productions of this company, he wrote for them *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*. These dramas deal with the failure of persons to understand each other and their inability to adapt themselves to changed conditions. Often the characters are so wrapped up in their own thoughts that they fail even to attend to the conversation of the others in the room. Hence they make irrelevant remarks prompted by their absorption in their own affairs. This failure to understand produces gloom and hopelessness. Chekhov's plays are atmospheric and undramatic.

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Following the manner of Chekhov and Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths*, Leonid Andreyev wrote his realistic dramas of Russian life. These, however, attracted less attention than the symbolical dramas, *The Life of Man* and *He Who Gets Slapped*. Andreyev is a pessimist, declaring that all is vanity. Humanity is continually being slapped in the face by life. He employs rhetorical speeches and theatrical devices to bring out this philosophy. *He Who Gets Slapped* made an excellent motion picture because of its element of melodrama. *Katerina* and *The Waltz of the Dogs* are even more morbid in their depiction of the ruin of sensitive souls through suspicion and disappointment. In Andreyev there is a strain of Byronic romanticism.

The combination of romanticism and symbolism is also the chief characteristic of the dramas by the Belgian poet, Maurice Maeterlinck. His creed is: "The great secret, the only secret, is that all things are secret." Hence many elements of mystery and mysticism give to his plays an unearthly atmosphere. Conflicting destinies bring unavertable catastrophes, altho some character, usually an old man, realizes the outcome of the struggle he is watching. From this observation is drawn a philosophical lesson. *Pelléas and Mélisande* and *The Blue Bird* are Maeterlinck's most widely known plays. The first is a series of dramatic sketches, in which

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the story is suggested rather than told. The reader receives the impression that the young lovers are unconscious victims of fate. Its fairy-like quality and fanciful humor have endeared *The Blue Bird* to children. For adults, however, its lesson is that happiness lasts only for the moment when self-sacrifice brings happiness to others. In a book on the mysticism of *The Blue Bird*, Maeterlinck stated the cardinal principle of his philosophy: "The unknown and the unknowable are and perhaps always will be necessary to our happiness."

The popular success gained by Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* has proved that realism and symbolism have not entirely excluded historical romance from the stage. Cyrano's devotion to his honor, his marvelous courage, his quick wit, and his pathetic death have moved thousands to admiration and affection. Brian Hooker has given us an excellent English translation, which retains the spirit of the original. Walter Hampden has made Cyrano and his famous nose as familiar to American audiences as Coquelin did to the French. *The Eaglet* and *Chanticleer* display Rostand's faults more clearly than *Cyrano*, but they are almost as effective on the stage. Rostand may be theatrical and superficial; he may resort to rhetorical flourishes; yet he does provide relief from the problem play.

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Eugène Brieux began his career as a realist, but soon turned to the problem play. He is sincere in presenting moral and social problems. He does, however, become dull, because he subordinates dramatic intensity to the moral purpose. Often one of his characters will deliver a lecture on the idea expounded in the play. Brieux attracted attention to his plays by somewhat suggestive titles, such as *The Red Robe* and *Damaged Goods*.

During the first years of the twentieth century the leader in modern Italian drama was Gabriele D'Annunzio. His fame was due in large measure to that great interpretative genius, Eleonora Duse, who acted in his *La Gioconda*, *The Dead City*, *Francesca da Rimini*, *Daughter of Jorio*, and other plays during her tours in Europe and America. D'Annunzio's absorption in the arts is reflected in these dramas, for he perceives life from the artist's point of view. He gives to his characters his own predominant traits. Therefore, his dramas reveal the soul of a morbid artist sensitive to beauty rather than the more universal feelings of normal humanity. In them the classical idea of an inevitable destiny is strangely combined with modern psychological introspection. The unpleasant themes, together with the unreality, have limited the appreciation of D'Annunzio's work. He is too literary for the majority.



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In the reaction against D'Annunzio's subjective method, Luigi Pirandello has taken an important part. As a follower of Ibsen he presents problems. These problems are, however, philosophical and not social, for Pirandello dramatizes an idea. When his *Six Characters in Search of an Author* was produced in New York, it was advertised as a play not for morons. The manager in this play asks concerning Italian drama: "What else can I do, if there are no more good comedies to be had from France, and we are reduced to putting on those of Pirandello, which nobody can make head or tail of and which he wrote on purpose just to make fun of you and me and the public?" *Six Characters* is a revelation of the difficulties the dramatist encounters in the creation, the production, and the reception of a play. *Right You Are If You Think You Are* brings out the idea that truth for the majority is an individual interpretation of objective facts. One group believes the hero insane; another is equally certain that his mother-in-law is insane, while the wife exclaims when she is asked to settle the question of her identity: "I am the daughter of Signora Frola, and the second wife of Signor Ponza. Yes, and—for myself, I am nobody . . . For myself I am—whoever you choose to have me." In his other plays Pirandello is continually asking "What is the truth?" He seeks to tear off the masks by show-

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ing the contrast between the apparent and the real.

About 1875 José Echegaray started a revival of the Spanish drama with his somewhat melodramatic plays. He depended upon stage effects to emphasize situations arising from an overbearing exercise of will power. *The Great Galeoto*, a character study, has alone retained its original success among all the plays by Echegaray and his followers.

The intellectual drama was introduced into Spain from France and Italy by Jacinto Benavente. He is concerned primarily with the influence of contemporary civilization upon the individual. Thus Julio in *In the Clouds* breaks away from limiting surroundings. *The Bonds of Interest* unfolds the plan of an ambitious youth to become a partner in a bank and to win a millionaire's daughter. Other plays, such as *The School of Princesses*, present the aristocratic or middle class society of Madrid in a mildly satirical fashion. Benavente's characters express their ideas at length in monologs and conversations, which reveal their true reactions toward life as well as the author's philosophy. They are all seeking happiness, and they find it by different means, but only after they have gained mastery of themselves.

Gregorio Martínez Sierra has a more sympathetic interest in his characters. They are in-

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dividuals and not general types expressing ideas about current problems. The plots of *The Cradle Song* and *The Kingdom of God*, two plays recently produced in America, are most simple. They deal with incidents in the lives of nuns in their care for the body and soul of the unfortunate. Yet Sierra has given these ordinary incidents a dramatic intensity.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the English theater-goer was entertained by the comic operas of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan and the plays of Arthur Wing Pinero, Oscar Wilde, and Henry Arthur Jones. Gilbert's *H. M. S. Pinafore*, *The Mikado*, *Iolanthe*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Princess Ida*, and *Patience* contain the most arrant nonsense, the most improbable situations, and the most remarkable persons. They are, however, good fun with amiable dashes of satire directed against dignified institutions or serious movements. Sir Arthur Sullivan's music has contributed much to their continued success on the stage.

After some experience as an actor Pinero began his career as a dramatist with his farcical comedies. In these comedies he places a dignified person in a compromising situation, such as the plight of Mr. Pasket in *The Magistrate*. Later he wrote social plays having a serious aim and tragedies revealing the efforts of persons to

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overcome past errors or serious weaknesses of character. Among the former are *Trelawney of the Wells* and *The Gay Lord Quex*, while the latter include *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, *Iris*, and *The Thunderbolt*.

Wilde's drawing-room plays, *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, are exceedingly brilliant in dialog and cynical in tone. They are, however, a trifle too clever. The problem plays of Jones, of which *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, *The Liars*, and *Mrs. Dane's Defense* are representative, are rather melodramatic but are effective on the stage. Since it is the literary fashion at present to deride the late Victorian era, these dramas are generally undervalued. They were, nevertheless, important in introducing the problem play into England.

Altho Pinero and Jones were indirectly influenced by Ibsen, they did not become such ardent followers of the Norwegian dramatist as the young Bernard Shaw. From the publication of his *Quintessence of Ibsenism* in 1891 until to-day, he has been continually before the public, because he is a great self-advertiser. He has said: "In order to gain a hearing it was necessary for me to attain the footing of a privileged lunatic, with the license of a jester. My method has, therefore, been to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say and then

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say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the real joke is that I am in earnest." His creed seems to be, "Whatever is, is wrong." All the things that are wrong in contemporary civilization are discussed in his highly diverting dramas.

*Mrs. Warren's Profession* informs us that society has been responsible for prostitution, because woman has not been able to attain economic independence until the present century. As long ago as 1894, *Arms and the Man* pointed out the foolishness of resorting to war. *Candida* is a satire on British conventions in general as well as on the ordinary triangle plays. *Major Barbara* reminds us that "poverty is the prime social sin." In *Man and Superman*, Tanner expresses many more of Shaw's ideas on socialism, which have finally been expounded in full in *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*. This volume he calls his "last will and testament to humanity."

Shaw also delights to humble the mighty. *The Man of Destiny*, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, and *St. Joan* emphasize neglected traits in the characters of these famous figures and make them less admirable than other treatments have done. Furthermore, these plays give him an opportunity to ruffle the English complacency by many clever remarks at England's expense. Scientific theories have received his attention in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Pygmalion*, and *Back to*

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*Methuselah*; religion in *The Devil's Disciple* and *Androcles and the Lion*; society in *Getting Married* and *Heartbreak House*; and politics in many of these plays, but especially in his latest, *The Apple Cart*. No field of activity or person can escape the Shavian criticism.

More astonishing still is the fact that Shaw makes his audiences think. They go home to read the prefaces to the published plays for further enlightenment. These prefaces are often as long as the plays, and sometimes as entertaining. He keeps preaching his doctrines and forcing persons to face unpleasant facts, but no one is offended. His plays are static, with their generalizations and interminable conversations. His characters are intellectual types in conflict with their environments. He has disregarded the laws of dramatic technique and transformed the theater into a schoolroom. What, then, is the secret of his success? Shaw himself has told us: "With an unprecedented pertinacity and obstinacy I have been dinning into the public head that I am an extraordinarily witty, brilliant, and clever man. That is now part of the public opinion of England; and no power in heaven or earth will ever change it."

A very different dramatist is James M. Barrie. He does not ask his audiences to think about problems, but only to pretend that they are in an imaginative world, where very surprising

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things may happen. *Dear Brutus* shows us what would happen if persons had a chance to live their lives over again. *Peter Pan* requires that we believe in fairies and the Never Land. *The Legend of Leonora* dramatizes motives and impulses. *The Admirable Crichton* suggests that the position of master and servant might be reversed to advantage in some circumstances. Sometimes the persons in Barrie's plays pretend that they are other people. Phoebe Throssel in *Quality Street* poses as a non-existent niece in order to attract her former lover, and the pathetic girl in *A Kiss for Cinderella* makes her life tolerable by identifying herself with the heroine of the fairy story. So Barrie requests us to forget our difficulties for three hours and allow our imagination to be reawakened.

Humor is also a very valuable quality in Barrie's estimation. *What Every Woman Knows* proves that laughter may save a husband from a fatal mistake. Maggie Shand knew that John's great fault was his lack of this saving quality. Barrie's charm depends largely upon his subtle humor, his sympathetic satire, his sly wit, and his delightful whimsicality. As Mrs. Page, the actress in *Rosalind*, tells the admiring youth, "All life's a game." Barrie aids the reader to play the game of imagination with him, since he has given very full and very amusing stage

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directions. Thus his plays are almost as interesting to read as to see.

John Galsworthy, on the other hand, employs the drama to call attention to serious social injustices. He always has deep sympathy for the sufferings of the lower classes or the misunderstood. In practically every play the plot develops from the contrast between those powerful because of wealth or position and the unfortunate persons coming into contact with them. He reiterates the fact that we do not have one standard for all classes. Hence prejudices and conflicts arise. *The Silver Box*, *Strife*, *Justice*, *The Pigeon*, *The Mob*, *The Skin Game*, *Loyalties*, *Old English*, and *Escape* deal with the different aspects of modern social conditions. These plays suggest that a more satisfactory state of affairs will come only when there is a better understanding among all groups.

Since the twentieth century has been a most active period in the theater, numerous other English writers have produced plays of merit. Among them are Lord Dunsany's romantic plays of terror and wonder, *The Gods of the Mountain*, *A Night at an Inn*, and *If*; John Drinkwater's historical dramas, *Abraham Lincoln*, *Oliver Cromwell*, and *Robert E. Lee*; St. John Ervine's realistic *John Ferguson*; Stephen Phillips's poetic *Paolo and Francesca*; and Milne's light comedies, *Mr. Pim Passes By* and



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*The Dover Road*. Every reader should be able to find an interesting play in such a varied assortment.

If he wishes, however, something mystical and legendary, he can find it in the plays of the Irish Renaissance. In 1899 the Abbey Theater of Dublin was founded for the production of the national dramas. William Butler Yeats, John Millington Synge, and Lady Augusta Gregory supplied this theater with plays based upon ancient Irish folk-tales and upon the peculiarities of Irish life. Their frank portrayal brought forth considerable discussion, and Synge's *Play Boy of the Western World* caused riots in several American theaters where it was produced. Yeats's *The Land of the Heart's Desire* and *Kathleen ni Houlihan* or any one of Lady Gregory's *Seven Short Plays* leave a lasting impression of beauty and sincerity. Whoever has been fortunate enough to see the Irish players in a characteristic production will not soon forget that performance.

During the nineteenth century the American theater imported dramas and actors from England or produced imitations of English plays by native playwrights. At the close of the century Clyde Fitch gained an initial success with his historical play, *Beau Brummell*, with Richard Mansfield as the hero. His social plays, particularly *The Truth*, proved that American society

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offered suitable material for the realistic drama and brought a renewed interest in the native drama.

Eugene O'Neill, the most widely known of present-day American dramatists, has taken his material from the daily lives of workers. While he was convalescing from an illness in 1913, he read Ibsen and Strindberg, whose influence is apparent in the early plays. O'Neill has stated that his purpose is to "explain the nature of my feeling for the impelling, inscrutable forces behind life which it is my ambition to at least faintly shadow at their work in my plays." He is a student of psychology, showing the effects of these forces upon individuals. *Ile* is a study of determination. *Emperor Jones* portrays the results of superstitious fear on the mind of a negro. In *Beyond the Horizon* a dreamer fails to gain happiness because he is tied to a farm, from which only death brings him release. O'Neill's heroes often struggle against social conditions or personal desires. Yank in *The Hairy Ape* seeks vainly to find his place in human society. Abbie Putnam in *Desire Under the Elms* is a victim of her own craftiness. The tragedy results from the failure of the characters to obtain the goal for which they are striving. This failure is usually due to their inability to understand themselves or others.

O'Neill's later plays are symbolical as well as

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psychological. They all concern man's search for satisfaction by various agencies, such as beauty (*The Fountain*), creative power (*The Great God Brown*), business efficiency (*Marco's Millions*), joy in life (*Lazarus Laughed*), emotional experiences (*Strange Interlude*), or a new god (*Dynamo*). Man does not acquire happiness because he is thwarted in the expression of his personality and defeated in his aims by contemporary ideas. As Kubla remarks in *Marco's Millions*, "he has not even a mortal soul, he has only an acquisitive instinct."

O'Neill has derived some of his stage innovations from the Greek tragedy. His own plays leave with us almost as deep an impression concerning an inevitable fate. Their sincerity and originality have contributed largely to the advancement of American drama and have brought it recognition in Europe.

To what extent the drama may be changed by competition with the talking motion pictures it is impossible to determine. Undoubtedly there is a place for both in the modern theater. No matter how clear the picture and voice on the screen may be, or how talented the actor, the spectator misses the living personality of a great interpreter. The drama may learn valuable lessons from the motion pictures, but it will never be replaced by them if it obeys the command "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature."

## XXVII

### EPIC AND EARLY NARRATIVE POETRY

POETRY is the oldest form of literary expression. Long before man wrote down his thoughts, he expressed his feelings in rhythmical language. To commemorate the deeds of legendary or contemporary heroes, the bards recited poems to accompaniment of the lyre at festivals or banquets. Each bard handled the existing material freely, rejecting or adding sections as the occasion demanded. These poems were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Finally someone combined them into a long narrative poem. Such was the origin of the folk-epic. Its various sections were produced by the people during several generations. A literary epic, however, is the work of a single poet, who uses the traditions and legends for a definite purpose.

The oldest extant epics in European literature are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. By the ninth century B. C. a large amount of poetry about past events, historical or mythical, had been accumulated in Greece. The most popular poems were undoubtedly those concerning the Trojan War, for the ten years' conflict to recover the beautiful Helen furnished many stirring inci-

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dents for the bards. At this period one of the poets collected these heroic narratives and composed the *Iliad* with the wrath of Achilles as the central episode. During the next century additions were made by others until the *Iliad* became the epic which has come down to us. The same bard may have written the main episodes of the *Odyssey*. The extant form, however, probably dates from the seventh century B. C. Tradition has assigned the composition of these epics to a blind bard named Homer, about whom we know nothing.

The *Iliad* is a somewhat disjointed account of the concluding year of the Trojan War. Achilles sulks in his tent because Agamemnon takes a captive girl. He does not fight again until his best friend Patroclus is killed. Then he avenges the death of Patroclus by killing Hector. The *Iliad* concludes with the burial of Hector. The gods and goddesses figure prominently as the protectors of the various heroes on both sides. To the modern reader the dignified Hector seems more noble than the impulsive Achilles, and the faithful Andromache is more appealing than the flirtatious Helen.

Finally Troy was captured through the craft of Odysseus, who conceived the idea of the wooden horse. The *Odyssey* relates his adventures during the years spent in wandering before he reached his home, the island of Ithaca. By

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trickery he escapes from many dangers only to find his house overrun by suitors for the hand of his wife, Penelope. She has remained faithful, putting off the suitors from day to day. Odysseus kills them and is happily reunited with his family. The *Odyssey* is a more unified poem than the *Iliad* because it has one central hero and one central theme. The incidents are more varied, and the action is more rapid. Furthermore, Odysseus's experiences with Polyphemus, Circe, Calypso, and Nausicaa appeal to the reader because of the humorous touches. As the poet understood human nature thoroughly, Odysseus is one of the most natural figures in all literature.

The Homeric poems are direct and simple narratives. Before the reader, passes a series of splendid pictures revealing the courage of heroes, the hardihood of seamen, the beauty of women, the faithfulness or disloyalty of wives, the adventures of wanderers, the sadness of separation, and the joy of reunion. In his essay, "On Translating Homer," Matthew Arnold stated four truths "essential for him who would have a right conception of Homer." He says: "Homer is rapid in his movement, Homer is plain in his words and style, Homer is simple in his ideas, Homer is noble in his manner." The translations which bring out these qualities most satisfactorily are the *Iliad* by Lang, Leaf.

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and Meyer, and the *Odyssey* by Butcher and Lang.

Unlike the Homeric poems, Virgil's *Æneid* is a very carefully composed literary epic with a definite purpose. Virgil proclaimed the greatness of Rome and praised the ancestors of his emperor. He expressed the national spirit with patriotic fervor. The Romans believed that they were descended from the Trojans, who had come to Italy after the fall of Troy. Virgil tells how Æneas, the son of the goddess Venus and the warrior Anchises, led these wanderers and founded a kingdom in Italy.

Virgil borrowed episodes, descriptions, and similes from Homer. The gods direct Æneas in his undertakings just as they aid Odysseus. Both heroes visit Hades to consult the spirits, delay their journey because of attractive women, and finally triumph over apparent unsurmountable difficulties. Virgil's hero, however, is less human. He is rather indifferent to the emotions and seems to have no will of his own. He places himself in the hands of fate, praying and sacrificing to the gods for guidance. In fact, all the characters in the *Æneid*, with the exception of Dido, are somewhat mechanical or shadowy. Dido's intense passion and despair at the departure of Æneas make her story the most vital episode in the poem. Another famous section is that

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describing the descent to Hades, where Æneas sees the great Romans destined to follow him.

Since Virgil hated war, his battle scenes are very poor. The combats lack vigor, for he had no interest in them. He was forced, however, to include them because they formed an essential element in a story of conquest. They also added to the glory of the powerful Roman nation. The emphasis on this theme assured the poem an immediate and permanent reputation, which is based largely on the masterly handling of episodes and the brilliant lines. Virgil spared no pains to make the poem as perfect as persevering labor could make it. In 19 B. C. he decided to visit the scenes of the Trojan War in Asia Minor and then to spend three years in a complete revision of the manuscript. He requested his friend Varius to burn the poem should anything happen to him on this journey. He did not live to carry out his plan, but fortunately Varius did not keep his promise to destroy the *Æneid*. At the command of Augustus this famous Latin poem was preserved to bring glory to Rome and the homage of centuries to Virgil.

From the seventh to the thirteenth centuries folk-epics concerning the national heroes were gradually assuming permanent form among the various European peoples. In these poems there is a fusion of pagan and Christian elements, for



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the monks who copied the early manuscripts inserted lines or episodes to modify the original tone. But even in the epics composed around Christian heroes like Charlemagne traces of racial traditions continually appear. Therefore, these poems are valuable repositories of the thoughts and ideals inspiring peoples who were emerging from the Dark Ages to found the modern nations.

The Old English epic *Beowulf* probably originated in songs sung by the gleemen before the Angles and Saxons left the Continent. It is composed of four parts: Beowulf's fight with a monster, Grendel; his fight with Grendel's mother beneath the waters of a dark lake; his fifty years' reign, and his last fight with a dragon. Throughout the poem runs the idea that men are powerless against Wyrd (fate), which determines their actions. The tone is stern and harsh but vigorous in the recital of brave deeds. Beowulf is the savior of his people, the mighty hero unsurpassed in strength, since he has supernatural powers to combat the forces of evil. Perhaps the most stirring section is that describing the young Beowulf's swimming match with Breca. This thrilling account reveals the qualities the Anglo-Saxons demanded their ideal hero should possess.

In *Beowulf* the customs of the Anglo-Saxon races are preserved in detail. Apparently the

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struggle for existence dominated their lives. Nature threatened them with the monsters lurking in dark forests and gloomy fens. The only pleasure they had was eating and drinking in the mead hall, where they listened to tales of heroic deeds and received gifts from the kings. Seldom were they free from some dread. Nowhere in the epic is there any reference to the kindlier aspects of nature. This ever-present sense of danger fostered a serious attitude, which is reflected in the moral tone and the Christian interpolations in the epic.

Similar to *Beowulf* in some of its incidents is *Grettir the Strong*, an Icelandic saga. Grettir was an outlaw and robber, whose great bravery and gigantic strength won him fame. Other sagas or Eddas tell stories about the gods or the adventures of Norse heroes. They are filled with marvelous feats, clever tricks, family feuds, simple explanations, fierce combats, and ghostly visitations. The supernatural plays a prominent part in these poems, because the Icelanders believed in the malevolent power of fiends and in curses. Even the gods cannot escape. From the Franks the Norseman learned the story of Siegfried and Brynhild and incorporated it into their own legendary lore, adding several romantic incidents.

Siegfried was, however, a German hero. His exploits were celebrated in the great Germanic

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epic, *The Nibelungenlied*. The first part relates the wooing, marriage, and murder of Siegfried, the second tells how his widow, Kriemhild, revenged the murder. The poem embodies ideals of loyalty and nobility, for Siegfried is no longer a pagan hero but has become a valiant knight. Many Christian elements have, therefore, been included along with the older pagan beliefs. Altho the supernatural parts are retained, they are subordinated. The elaborate descriptions of the activities and even the clothes of the knights and ladies bore the modern reader, but they were duly appreciated by the medieval audiences. Occasionally a scene is enlivened by tragic intensity or grotesque humor. *The Nibelungenlied* is a triumphant expression of the German faith in the righteousness of just revenge.

The national epic of France, *The Song of Roland*, was originally a simple poem composed in the eighth century to celebrate an incident in Charlemagne's campaign of 778 in Spain. By the eleventh century the poem had been elaborated into a stirring account of how Roland with a few followers gave battle to the Saracens in the Pyrenees. Betrayed by the treachery of his stepfather, Ganelon, the hero is too proud to summon aid until it is too late to save himself and his companions. His impetuous courage and loyalty to his emperor are admirable, but

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his thoughtlessness is deplorable. The poet contrasts him with his noble cousin, Oliver. "Roland is brave, and Oliver is wise." The story is told swiftly and vigorously in a simple style. Several impressive passages, such as Roland's death, and many effective lines make *The Song of Roland* the greatest epic of Christian chivalry.

Ruy Diaz de Bivar, called El Cid Campeador (the Lord Champion) because of his victories over the Moors, became the Roland of Spanish literature. *The Cid* recounts his adventures after his exile from Castile and his vengeance upon the unworthy husbands of his daughters. The hero is kind and generous as well as brave and fearless. His noble qualities win him the regard even of his enemies. The great Soldan of Persia sends gifts to him and seeks his friendship. Since the Spaniards were continually fighting the Moors, the sections of the epic dealing with mighty feats of arms are the most vigorous. *The Cid*, therefore, was extremely popular outside of Spain in an age exalting courageous achievements and courteous actions.

The most important medieval epic and in some respects the most remarkable poem in all literature is Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The inspiration for this masterpiece and for Dante's *New Life* was Beatrice Portinari. He adored her with all the chivalrous devotion of a medieval lover and worshiped her as his patron saint.

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In the *New Life* Dante describes in prose and poetry his emotions when he saw Beatrice or heard some fact concerning her. After her death in 1290 he determined to write in her honor a poem in which he should "say concerning her that which has never been said concerning any woman."

In 1302 Dante was exiled from Florence when his party suffered defeat. For the remaining years of his life he wandered from court to court in northern Italy. His prose works, written in Latin, discuss politics and government. Dante desired a united Italy, in which the emperor should be recognized as the head of temporal affairs and the pope as supreme ruler in ecclesiastical matters.

The *Divine Comedy* is a difficult poem to read, because Dante refers to so many historical and contemporary events and alludes to numerous classical myths. He was a great scholar and student of philosophy and theology. To understand his magnificent vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven the reader must have a comprehensive knowledge of life and thought in the Middle Ages. The *Divine Comedy* is the epitome of medieval culture.

Interpreted literally, this epic is an account of Dante's journey through Hell and Purgatory with Virgil as his guide, and through Heaven in the company of Beatrice. In Hell he hears the

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stories of the sinners condemned to eternal torment; in Purgatory he learns how atonement is made for sin committed on earth; and in Heaven he observes the rewards granted to the virtuous. But the poem is more than a vivid description of a vision. In a dedicatory letter to Can Grande, Dante wrote: "The object of the whole work is to make those who live in this life leave their state of misery and to lead them to a state of happiness." Allegorically, then, the *Divine Comedy* shows man's struggle against sin. At first he is led by Reason (Virgil), but Reason cannot teach him the highest wisdom, the contemplation of God. Revelation (Beatrice) alone can give man an understanding of divine love, "the love which moves the sun and other stars."

The *Divine Comedy* is constructed on the mystic number three. The three parts are divided into thirty-three cantos nearly equal in length, with an introductory canto in the *Inferno*. There are nine circles in the *Inferno*, nine ledges in the *Purgatorio*, and nine spheres in the *Paradiso*. The Empyrean or Highest Heaven surrounds all. Furthermore, the meter is based on three rimes, the *terza rima*, and each stanza contains three lines. The second line rimes with the first and third of the next stanza. Technically the poem is a marvel of composition.

Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy* in Italian

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so that it might be read by the common man as well as by the educated clergy. He raised the Tuscan dialect to the position of a literary language and made it the standard speech for the educated classes. Through Dante's influence Florentine culture spread not only throughout Italy but also to the neighboring nations. Carlyle characterized him as "world-deep," for he reaches the heart of every man who will make the effort to comprehend him.

The *Inferno* contains more famous passages than the other parts because Dante found in Hell persons whose tragic stories have a universal appeal. Paolo and Francesca, Ulysses, and Count Ugolino are the most striking figures, for the poet has characterized them with rare skill. The moral and philosophical discussions in the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* lessen considerably the general interest in them. Also they have few memorable lines, such as the words written over the gate of Hell: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here!"

When Longfellow translated the *Divine Comedy* into English, he wrote two sonnets as a preface for his translation. The concluding lines of the second are a splendid tribute to Dante's genius:

Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,  
What exultations trampling on despair,  
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,  
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What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,  
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,  
This medieval miracle of song!

Besides the medieval epics there are a vast number of contemporary narrative poems dealing with the adventures of Charlemagne's knights, the Arthurian legends, classical stories, the lives of the saints, and the current conditions. Altho all these poems were popular, the Arthurian legends seem to have been the favorites throughout Europe. In France, Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes adapted the material to conform to traditional ideas concerning courtly love. Marie had lived in England at the court of Henry II, whose Queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, was an authority on courtly love. Her *lais* on Arthurian and other subjects are simply and delightfully told. Arthur O'Shaunessey has freely translated several into English. Chrétien's chief poems are *Knight of the Lion*, *Eric and Enid*, *Knight of the Cart*, and *Percevale*.

The last poem was a source for Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, written in German about 1200. Wolfram gave to the legend of the Holy Grail a deep spiritual significance. His work has more strength and naturalness than the typical court poems. Another German poet, Gottfried von Strassburg, described the overwhelming power of love in his *Tristan*. Altho he took his



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material from French sources, he treated it with more sincerity. Consequently his poem has an earnestness which these lack.

The finest Middle-English poem on the Arthurian stories is *Gawain and the Green Knight*. From the very beginning it is filled with dramatic suspense. The challenge to a beheading contest, the consternation of the court when the Green Knight picks up his severed head and rides off, Gawain's journey to the Green Chapel, his experiences at the castle, and the explanations about them after he has met the Green Knight, who only wounds him, are told swiftly and effectively. Gawain is not quite the perfect knight, because he accepts the green girdle altho he resists the love-making of the knight's wife. Throughout the poem the religious tone is mingled with the mystery motive.

The period in English literature when *Gawain and the Green Knight* was written is called the Age of Chaucer from its most illustrious poet. As a boy Geoffrey Chaucer was a page in the household of Lionel, Duke of Clarence. Later he was attached to the king's household. From 1370 until a few years before his death he received various appointments in the diplomatic and civil service. His missions to France and Italy brought him into contact with the literatures of those nations and directly influenced his work. For Chaucer poetry was an avocation

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to be pursued as a relief from the trials of his busy days.

His early poems are not very original, because he merely imitated the French love poetry or applied it to a special purpose, as in *The Boke of the Duchesse*. After his first visit to Italy, he wrote the *Hous of Fame* and the *Parliament of the Foules*, which are somewhat more individual but still show his dependence upon foreign models. His first great poem, *Troilus and Criseyde*, is also derived from an Italian source, Boccaccio's *Filostrato*. Chaucer, however, made numerous changes in the story and gave far more attention to the delineation of character. Hence the poem has been praised as a psychological study of a wise and cunning woman, a scheming and cynical old man, a romantic and philosophical youth, and a self-reliant man of action.

If Chaucer had written only these poems, he would be considered an interesting figure in medieval English literature but not a world poet. His *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of stories from various sources, has placed him in the front rank of great narrative writers. In the Prologue he describes twenty-nine pilgrims who had assembled at the Tabard Inn in Southwark to go on the spring pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. These men and women belong to every social class and represent

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many occupations. In a few lines Chaucer has characterized each pilgrim with rare skill and good humor. The knight, the prioress, the monk, the friar, the merchant, the student, the plowman, the miller, the wife of Bath, and all the others are exceedingly human in their attitudes and prejudices. The stories they tell while they travel with the merry host of the Tabard as guide also reveal Chaucer's power of observation. Even when he retells a conventional tale, he gives it new life. By using the Midland dialect for his *Canterbury Tales*, he made it the standard for modern English. His language is difficult, but his lively descriptions will repay the reader for the effort to master it.

Chaucer's friend, whom he addresses as "O Moral Gower" in the closing lines of *Troilus and Criseyde*, wrote in Latin, French, and English. His English poem, *Confessio Amantis*, was a storehouse of plots for the Elizabethan dramatists. These stories are too lengthy and too rambling as well as too didactic to hold the interest. Also they lack definite characterization. They are, however, distinctly representative of the allegorical poetry which delighted fourteenth-century readers.

Another allegory is Langland's *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, preaching a doctrine of salvation by good works. Piers, the simple worker, leads the company to truth after he has finished

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his plowing. The poem contains references to contemporary events, emphasizes the hardships suffered by the poor, and satirizes social and religious conditions. Langland advises people to do their work honestly instead of going on pilgrimages. In the concluding section he is identified with Christ.

Contemporary conditions are also described in the ballads, written down probably in the fifteenth century, altho many are much older. They were handed down by word of mouth from father to son and usually altered by each reciter. Since they are the poetry of the people, they express the ideas and feelings of the community. They tell impersonally a simple, direct story with few comments. The repetitions and refrains made them easier to learn, while the dialog increased greatly their naturalness. Professor Child collected about three hundred English and Scottish ballads, dealing with border conflicts, domestic tragedies, supernatural occurrences, and Robin Hood's adventures. This outlawed hero was most popular because he played tricks on the sheriff, robbed the wealthy merchants and monks, but aided the poor. The wholesome humor and delightful spontaneity of the ballads betray their communal origin.

The literary epics of the Italian Renaissance are deadly dull because their stories move so slowly. The forty-six cantos of Lodovico

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Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* tell about numerous adventures which have little relationship to the central episode, the madness of Orlando. The poet has interspersed elaborate digressions in praise of the House of Este, whose dukes were his patrons. He pretended that Ruggiero and Bradamante, his chief characters, were the ancestors of this house. He inserted the various subordinate episodes to keep these lovers apart until the end of the poem. Ariosto's merits are his fertile imagination, his directness in narration, and his endeavor to reach perfection by constant revision. The *Orlando Furioso* expresses the sensuous and romantic ideas dominating the Italian Renaissance.

When he was seventeen years old, Torquato Tasso published his *Rinaldo*, an imitation of Ariosto. His long epic, *Jerusalem Delivered*, is a story concerning the capture of the Holy City by the Crusaders. In minor episodes, more or less unrelated to the main theme, Tasso employed the supernatural to gain impressive effects. His main purpose was to pay homage to the religious fervor actuating the Crusaders. As he had a sensitive and melancholy temperament, he treated most sympathetically the characters in the romantic episodes. Shortly after he completed this poem, he suffered from recurring attacks of insanity, brought on by the feeling that his work was not appreciated at the court.

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The discoveries made by Vasco da Gama furnished Luis de Camoens with material for his *Lusiads*. Since Camoens had spent seventeen years in exile in India, he could describe from experience the scenes visited by his hero. This fine epic of Portuguese valor became an inspiration for his countrymen when they were attacked by the Spanish. Furthermore, it has revealed the musical quality of the Portuguese language.

By 1550 the age of chivalry had almost passed. The English poet Edmund Spenser tried to revive its spirit by his *Faerie Queene*, written "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." He planned to relate in twelve books the adventures of twelve knights representing the twelve virtues. These adventures were to take place on the twelve days during the annual feast held by Gloriana, the Faery Queen. Spenser finished only six and a half books of this astounding task. The poem is, moreover, a religious, political, and moral allegory designed to teach man his duty by inspiring examples.

Spenser borrowed many episodes from Ariosto but gave them a new significance. He used old words and archaic forms to create a romantic atmosphere. He also invented the Spenserian stanza, which was admirably fitted for a sustained effect. On account of his magnificent descriptions, colorful imagery, and musical verse,

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Charles Lamb called him "the poet's poet." The *Faerie Queene* reflects the spirit of the age but fails to make a universal appeal because it lacks variety and vitality.

John Milton also sought in his *Paradise Lost* to teach a lesson. He wished to "justify the ways of God to men." *Paradise Lost* is the sublime epic of Puritanism, expounding the Calvinistic doctrines in long arguments. It begins with the expulsion of the rebel angels from heaven, describes their plans for revenge, relates how Satan tempted man, and closes with man's fall and departure from the Garden of Eden. A great Milton scholar, Professor Masson, has thus characterized the poem: "Whatever else *Paradise Lost* may be, it is certainly one of the most learned poems in the world." Into it Milton placed the knowledge he had gained from Cambridge, from his Italian journey, and from his extensive reading.

The hero of the poem is Satan, for he is the only character in whom the reader has any interest. His unconquerable courage and clever schemes win our admiration. Even tho he directed his activities against man, we do not regret that he succeeded. He is superb in his acceptance of his fate:

Which way shall I fly .

Infinite wrath and infinite despair?  
Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell.

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And in the lowest deep a lower deep,  
Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide  
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.

Then he asserts his determination to follow evil:

So farewell hope, with hope farewell fear,  
Farewell remorse; all good to me is lost.  
Evil, be thou my good.

*Paradise Regained*, which recounts Christ's victory over the tempter, has little of the majesty of its predecessor. Milton's dramatic poem, *Samson Agonistes*, does, however, contain many impressive passages. The blind Milton could well understand the agony suffered by the captive in the Philistine prison. In one of his finest sonnets Wordsworth has eulogized the great Puritan poet's attitude toward life:

Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
So didst thou travel on life's common way,  
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

During the eighteenth century Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock was hailed in Germany as the new Milton. Posterity has decided that his *Messias* was far overrated by his contemporaries. Its twenty cantos contain too much theological discussion and too little action and characterization. Yet Klopstock's influence upon



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German poetry through this epic and through his patriotic odes marks him as the forerunner of the nationalist movement in German literature.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries several poets wrote mock-epics. They applied the grand style and the machinery of the classical epics to some trifling incident. The most famous mock-epic is Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, a very witty satire on female frivolities. The theme was most suitable to Pope's particular genius. His clever epigrams and brilliant satire portray perfectly the artificial life in the days of Queen Anne.

After the eighteenth century few poems were written in imitation of the classical epics. The reaction against their artificial style and heroic themes discouraged poets from attempting such sustained efforts on a grand scale. The long narrative poems written during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have only slight similarities with these earlier poems, altho some have been designated as epics. Modern poets have approached their subjects from a more personal point of view even when they have treated heroic actions.

## XXVIII

### DIDACTIC AND SATIRICAL POETRY

ACCORDING to Dr. Johnson the poet should be "the interpreter of nature and the legislator of mankind." Some poets have considered this to be their main function. They have, therefore, aimed to instruct either directly or indirectly. This didactic purpose may be praiseworthy, but in the majority of instances it has weakened a poem if it has predominated. An excellent poem may be spoiled by a moral tag, such as the concluding stanzas of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

The appeal of moral, philosophical, and satirical poetry is almost entirely an intellectual one. Often the reader feels that the poet could have given his message much more directly in prose. Yet in a poetic age the writer may be forced to disseminate his ideas by this means. Or he may be able to express himself more easily in poetry. Sometimes he uses the poetic form as a disguise for his satire. Many moral and satirical poems are merely literary curiosities, but a few have a permanent place in literature.

A universally popular form is the fable, which draws a moral lesson from an experience of a man or an animal. The Greeks ascribed their

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fables, originally written in prose but preserved in the poetic version of Babrius, to Æsop. It is a question whether Æsop ever existed, but he was supposed to have lived about the sixth century before Christ. At least, in classical times the fables were widely known and frequently collected by both Greek and Latin authors.

In the Middle Ages, Æsop's name was also attached to various collections. Other poems in a similar vein were the *Fabliaux*. These have been defined as "the recital, for the most part comic, of a real or possible event occurring in the ordinary conditions of human life." Some ridicule, in rather free language, the knights, the clergy, the peasants, and especially the feminine sex. Another group deals with the adventures of Reynard the Fox, whose cunning extracted him from numerous difficulties. In these tales the moral is generally subordinated to the humorous or narrative interest.

From all sources Jean La Fontaine drew the material for the twelve books of his *Fables Choies Mises en Vers*, published between 1668 and 1693. His artistic treatment of this material earned for his fables a lasting reputation. His narrative style is simple but varied, and his satire is genial. In his poems we have the fable at its best.

Whereas the moral is secondary in the fable, it is the chief feature of philosophical poetry.

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The poet desires to give practical or ethical rules for conduct. The earliest extant didactic poems in European literature were written in Greece about the middle of the eighth century B. C. The Greeks ascribed them, together with numerous similar poems, to Hesiod, about whom many fictitious stories arose. The *Works and Days* tells farmers and sailors when they should perform certain tasks. To illustrate his points Hesiod recounted appropriate stories, such as the legend concerning Pandora, the first woman. The *Descent of the Gods* is a religious text-book, describing the creation and explaining Greek mythology. These poems are primarily valuable for their accounts of the customs and beliefs among the early Greeks.

The most remarkable poem in Latin literature gives a scientific exposition of the universe. Lucretius anticipates the atomic and evolutionary theories in several passages in his *Of the Nature of Things*, altho he also credits some amusing errors. The poet's purpose was to remove the fear of death by showing that all the universe is composed of material particles in various combinations. When these particles separate, material things disintegrate. He rejects the idea of a future life with the words "the soul's dissolved, like smoke, into the lofty winds of air." Furthermore, he states that religion has brought unhappiness because it is

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based on the superstitious belief that the gods are concerned with human affairs. He traces the rise of man from nature to civilization and discusses his relationship to the universe, sympathizing with him in his struggles and sufferings. *Of the Nature of Things* is thus a summary of Epicurean philosophy in great poetry. William Ellery Leonard's English translation, which retains in a large measure the excellence of the original, is recommended to readers desiring a knowledge of this philosophy.

The didactic poems written during the Middle Ages would fill volumes, for in verses the clergy taught religious truths, the schoolmen debated theological and philosophical points, and the secular writers composed allegorical arguments about courtly love. The modern reader finds the majority of these dull and confusing on account of their interminable discussions. Occasionally a striking passage will relieve the monotony, but these sections are rare. The Old English poem, *Christ*, by Cynewulf, contains some beautiful lines and dramatic pictures of the Nativity, Ascension, and Last Judgment. It reveals better than any other medieval religious poem the sincere reverence which characterized the Christianity of the age.

A typical representative of the love allegory is the French *Roman de la Rose*, translated into English by Chaucer. For more than two hun-

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dred years this poem, containing over twenty-two thousand lines, retained its popularity throughout Europe. By a dream allegory the authors, William de Lorris and Jean de Meung, expound the art of love in its entirety. The first part has some very beautiful descriptions, but the second is overburdened with long speeches by Reason to convince the lover that the disadvantages of love are more numerous than its pleasures. Stories and quotations from classical sources as well as references to current ideas make the *Roman de la Rose* a veritable compendium of medieval knowledge. As Jean de Meung satirized the tendencies of the day, it is a valuable source book for the student of the period.

To understand satirical poetry, unless it is directed against universal faults in human nature, the reader must know something about the conditions which inspired it. Hence political and personal satires have become almost unintelligible if they are not edited with copious notes. This is, however, not so true concerning social satire, because similar conditions recur at different historical periods. The Rome of the emperors, for example, was not so very different in its essential characteristics from the New York of the mayors.

Martial came to Rome from his native Spain to seek a patron. He presented his *Book of Spec-*

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*tacles* to Titus at the celebration of the inauguration of the Colosseum, perhaps in the hope of gaining royal favor. This book and his twelve books of epigrams give an excellent idea of Roman society in the first century. He used the epigram to flatter a patron, to congratulate a friend, to describe a dinner, or to rail against contemporary vices. He declared his purpose in the following lines:

'Tis my constant care  
To lash the vices, but the persons spare.

All types feel the lash, since Martial had a keen eye for follies. He preferred a quiet country life to the gaiety of the capital and finally returned to Spain. His sharp wit and terse style appealed to the eighteenth-century writers, who considered him the world's greatest epigrammatist.

The conditions in Rome were so bad that Juvenal declared that "it is difficult not to write satire." He was a realist presenting life from all angles. He introduced his satires with this statement: "All that men do, their hope, fear, wrath, pleasure, joys, and gaddings make up the medley of my book." His attacks on extravagance and licentiousness are harsh and caustic. His later satires deal in a somewhat milder tone with abstract subjects. He points out the value of parental example in bringing up

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children and states that virtue is true nobility. Juvenal looked with alarm at the tendency of the newly rich to ape Grecian customs. He preached the doctrine of Rome for the Romans.

Despite his coarseness and exaggeration, Juvenal has been universally admired for his descriptive ability. By the choice of pertinent details he presents a clear-cut picture. His fiery diction gives color and vitality to his descriptions. Dr. Johnson adapted two of the satires to eighteenth-century England under the titles, *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. With a few changes in names Juvenal's satires would describe conditions in modern New York.

The neo-classic revival in the European literatures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced several powerful satirists. Dryden, Pope, and Goldsmith in England and Parini in Italy wrote the best-known poems in this manner.

After the Restoration John Dryden supported the new government, which he had praised in *Astræa Redux* at the return of Charles II. His *Annus Mirabilis* describes the Dutch War, the great fire, and the plague of 1666, and is enlivened with an occasional satiric remark. His powers as a satirist, however, were not fully displayed until *Absalom and Achitophel*, *The Medal*, and *Macflecknoe*. The first two poems, directed against the Earl of Shaftesbury, who



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had been tried for treason but acquitted, contain some excellent portraits of his contemporaries. Dr. Johnson said: "There is no need to inquire why those verses were read, which to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the cooperation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment." Dryden had no personal grudge against these politicians but merely wished to disclose their intrigues. *Macflecknoe* is, on the other hand, a personal attack upon the poet Shadwell, who would be entirely forgotten if it were not for Dryden's line, "But Shadwell never deviates into sense."

Besides the satires, Dryden wrote two didactic poems, expounding the doctrines of both the Anglican and the Catholic Churches. The reason he defended both churches was that he became a Catholic in 1687. Therefore, *The Hind and the Panther*, a beast fable in form, controverts the arguments he had previously used in *Religio Laici* to recommend the Anglican Church. Neither poem shows any deep religious conviction. Dryden's ingenuity in argument and vigor in satire have kept his poetry alive.

Alexander Pope used satire to revenge himself upon his enemies. Unamiable and sensitive, he quarreled with most of his contemporaries and alienated his friends sooner or later. The fact that he recognized the qualities of greatness in

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those he satirized adds to the sting of his words. He knew exactly where to direct his thrusts. In the *Dunciad* and the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope abused his critics and the persons he thought had tried to injure his reputation.

His *Essay on Man* discusses the relation of man to the universe, to himself, and to society. It is a versification of the deistic philosophy based on the theory that "whatever is, is right." The poet advised man not to bother with the problems of the universe but to endeavor to understand himself.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,  
The proper study of mankind is Man.

Pope polished and refined the heroic couplet until it was a perfect medium for the expression of his ideas. The classical precision, terseness, and balance of this meter set forth his keen wit to the best possible advantage. Hence his couplets have been quoted more frequently than the lines of any other English poet except Shakespeare. This fact substantiates his statement that

True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,  
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.

In the next generation Oliver Goldsmith sought to prove by a survey of mankind in *The Traveler* that happiness cannot be found anywhere. In this discussion of European civiliza-

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tion he gave practically no place to natural scenery, altho the Swiss mountains, the Italian lakes, and the Dutch canals furnished the background. *The Deserted Village* is another argumentative poem on the thesis:

Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

Goldsmith criticizes social customs and shows in contrasting pictures the results brought by changing conditions upon the happy life of a flourishing village. The poem is read to-day for its delightful characterizations, its expression of sympathy for the poor, and its descriptions of nature. Goldsmith looked back with affection to his youth in Ireland. Through a haze of sentiment he described Sweet Auburn with its kindly parson and respected schoolmaster.

Probably Giuseppe Parini had read Pope, for his *The Day* reflects the spirit of the English satirist. It depicts the morning, afternoon, evening, and night of a fashionable young Italian in Milan. Parini points out how the frivolous society wasted its time. His expert handling of blank verse caused a later Italian poet to call him "the Virgil of Modern Italy."

Since the eighteenth century didactic and satirical poems have lost popular favor because the romantic revival taught readers to expect an emotional and personal note in poetry.

## XXIX

### LYRICAL AND PASTORAL POETRY

A LYRIC is a short poem, musical in style and personal in tone. The writer expresses subjectively his emotional reaction to his experiences. Originally the term was applied by the Greeks to poetry recited to the accompaniment of the lyre. To-day it is used to designate many forms of poetry besides songs. Even prose may be lyrical, provided it has a musical cadence. A pastoral describes rural scenes and customs. Many pastorals contain narrative or dramatic passages, which serve to add a romantic glamour to an idealized rustic existence. Seldom do the pastorals suggest that there are any hardships in country life. When they do mention the severer aspects, they emphasize the compensating peacefulness and simplicity.

Only fragments of early Greek lyric poetry have come down to us. Apparently from references in later works a number of poets writing during the sixth and seventh centuries B. C. were held in great honor. Alcæus, Sappho, and Anacreon have been particularly praised. Horace imitated many poems by Alcæus and spoke of him as a great poet. Alcæus participated in politics at Mytilene and was exiled for

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some years. His political poems describe a warrior's hall, the ship of state, and the strife between the parties. In another group of poems to be sung at banquets he extolled the pleasures of wine.

Sappho, addressed by Alcæus as "Violet-tressed, pure, softly-smiling Sappho" and called by Plato the "Tenth Muse," is generally considered the world's most inspired feminine poet. According to a legend, she cast herself into the sea in despair when the handsome Phaon rejected her love. On the island of Lesbos she conducted a school for girls interested in poetry, who seem often to have been indifferent to her instruction. She was primarily a poet of love, passionately singing about its pleasures and pains. She also composed hymns in honor of Aphrodite and bridal songs for the weddings of her friends. The Sapphic stanza is most effective in its simple beauty, as Swinburne has demonstrated by his use of it. With all her passionate ardor Sappho at times could express tender feeling, as in the following poem:

All that the glittering morn hath driven afar  
Thou callest home, O evening star!  
Thou callest sheep, thou callest kid to rest,  
And children to their mother's breast.

Since Anacreon was not so independent as Alcæus, he enjoyed the patronage of the tyrants, Polycrates and Hipparchus. The court life suited

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him exactly, for he liked ease and comfort. His graceful poems praised his patrons or entertained their guests. They express the joy and optimism of youth or regret its passing. Anacreon's light verse was imitated by many successors, whose poems, collected under the title *Anacreontics*, were long believed to be genuine.

Another type of Greek lyric poetry was the ode in honor of victors at the various athletic contests. Simonides of Ceos developed this form by introducing a myth concerning the heroes or gods. His poetry has ease and pathos but little vigor. In 1896 twenty poems by his nephew, Bacchylides, were discovered in Egypt. The longest is an ode celebrating the victory won by the horse of Hiero, ruler of Syracuse, at the Olympic games. The others are either odes of victory or lyrical poems based on myths. Bacchylides strove for technical perfection and elegance in style. He seldom attained the dignity of his younger contemporary Pindar.

Forty-four odes by this greatest lyric poet of Greece have been preserved from the seventeen books collected by Alexandrian scholars. Pindar came from Thebes to Athens, where he studied choral composition. Later he spent some years at the court of Hiero of Syracuse. His fame was so great that his services were constantly demanded by princes or wealthy men. For Pindar poetry was an exceedingly profitable profession.

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. He celebrated victories won in every sport at the Olympian, Pythian, Isthmian, and Nemean games. A Pindaric ode begins with a reference to the victory, then relates some myth connected with the victor's family or native city, and concludes with a moral lesson. It was sung by a chorus, which performed a rhythmic dance during the singing of the first two stanzas, the strophe and antistrophe, but stood in a special formation during the epode. The composition of the poem is limited by this elaborate form, for the stanzas must be carefully balanced and the poem must contain three stanzas or some multiple of three. Pindar so mastered this difficult form that Matthew Arnold coined the word "Pindarism" to designate the power of style and praised the magnificent imagery and noble expression of the odes. He said: "Pindar is a poet on whom, above all other poets, the power of style seems to have exercised an inspiring and intoxicating effect."

After Alexander conquered Egypt, he built the city of Alexandria, which became the literary center of the Grecian world during the third century B. C. Here Ptolemy founded the famous library containing 700,000 manuscripts and encouraged learned men to gather at his court. The most important Alexandrian poet is Theocritus, the master of the idyl, a little picture of pastoral life. In his *Idyls* he often incorporated

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the folk-songs sung at the festivals in his native Sicily, where the shepherds strove to win a carved bowl or lamb. From these contests he obtained his subjects, such as the lament of the forsaken lover, the lover's devotion to his beloved, and the dirge for the dead shepherd. He also adapted from them the recurring refrain. The chief quality in the *Idyls* is their realistic descriptions of nature. Neither Virgil nor any other imitator in ancient or modern European literature has been able to surpass Theocritus in this respect.

The fifteenth idyl, *The Festival of Adonis*, is a masterpiece of realistic dialog and clever characterization. It describes in amusing detail the experiences of two Syracusan women, who go to Ptolemy's palace to see the beautifully decorated image of Adonis and to hear a famous artist sing the hymn in his honor. In its freshness, truth to human nature, and humorous situations it is so natural that it has a universal appeal. Gorgo and Praxinoë might be two American ladies going to the Metropolitan Opera House to hear their favorite soprano.

The principal source for Greek lyric poetry from the sixth century B. C. to the sixth century A. D., is the *Anthology*, or "collection of flowers," discovered at Heidelberg in 1607. The original collection was made in the first century B. C. by Meleager, who called his book the *Gar-*



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*And*. Five other writers added to the work as they transcribed it, until over four thousand short poems were included. Since the poems touch every mood and experience, the *Anthology* gives us a complete résumé of Greek thought and feeling.

Virgil imitated the Greek idyl in his ten *Eclogues*, which are largely conventional descriptions of the experiences and loves of the shepherds. They do, however, indicate that Virgil appreciated nature and enjoyed the peaceful life on his farm in Northern Italy. A further indication of Virgil's interest in rural life is the *Georgics*, written at the suggestion of Mæcenas to encourage farmers to restore the lands devastated by the wars. The poem discusses the tilling of the soil, the cultivation of trees and vines, and the care of cattle and bees. But it also contains some discerning descriptions, such as that of spring, and some entertaining legends. Virgil always preferred the quiet of the country to the pleasures of Augustan society.

Catullus enjoyed the gay life in the capital, to which he had come from Verona hoping perhaps for a more appreciative audience. In 61 B. C. he met Clodia, the attractive wife of the governor of Cisalpine Gaul. For the next four years she was, under the name of Lesbia, the inspiration for his poetry. He extols her beauty, rages against her fickleness, and finally deter-

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mines to drive her image from his mind. He decided that "women's promises are writ in water" and went to Bithynia to forget his Lesbia.

In other poems he gives his impressions formed on these travels and hurls invectives against politicians. His longer poems on marriage and the devotion of lovers lack the simplicity and passion of the shorter pieces. Catullus was at his best when he was reflecting his sensitive feelings and passionate reactions to his experiences.

This ardent personal note is almost entirely lacking in the poetry of Horace. He accepted life philosophically, gaining from the swiftly flying moments whatever enjoyment he could. He realized that life is transitory and death is inevitable, but this knowledge did not disturb his equanimity. All he asked was:

Health to enjoy the blessings sent  
From Heaven; a mind unclouded, strong;  
A cheerful heart; a wise content;  
An honored age; and song.

His friendship with Mæcenas, the patron of literature, brought him many blessings, among which was the famous Sabine farm. This friendship was purely a social relationship, for Horace cared nothing for politics. He even refused to become the emperor's private secretary. He was

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welcomed at the court but never forced to be present. Once he declined to leave his farm at the request of Mæcenæ. Apparently his patron appreciated his abilities and respected his wishes.

Horace divided his poetry into four groups, *Satires*, *Epodes*, *Epistles*, and *Odes*. In the *Satires* he tells how he was annoyed by a bore, how the newly rich sought social prominence, how people gossiped about their neighbors, how he experienced hardships on his journeys, and how he spent his time on his farm. The *Epodes* deal principally with events of the time. The *Epistles* discuss in a somewhat didactic manner literature and philosophy and give practical rules for conducting one's life. Altho many poems in all three groups have fine qualities, few attain the artistic finish of the *Odes*.

The technical perfection of these poems has never been successfully imitated in Latin or in translation. Horace became interested in the mechanics of verse during his early years when he was studying the difficult meters of early Greek poetry. He strove to attain a mastery over these forms and so well accomplished his aim that the *Odes* have remained unique in excellence of form. They touch almost every human emotion: friendship, love, patriotism, joviality, conviviality, and serious reflection. They are, however, frequently conventional without any sincere feeling. Horace's impersonal

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tone and facile style were greatly admired in the eighteenth century, when the neo-classicists particularly regarded his principles.

Ovid was about twenty years younger than Horace. He had been trained for an official career but decided to devote himself to poetry. In his *Tristia*, recounting the sorrows of his exile, he calls himself "that playful poet of tender love." His love poems gained him prominence in the literary circle at Rome until 8 A. D., when he was banished to Tomi on the Black Sea. The chief reason for his exile has never been accurately determined. It may have been a political intrigue, for his own statement that he was banished because of a poem seems hardly credible, as the *Art of Love* had been published eight years before. This poem explains the methods of winning and keeping a mistress or a lover. Ovid plainly had a thorough knowledge of the feminine heart.

Perhaps he had gained this insight from experience or observation of love affairs in the frivolous society of the Augustan Age. The poems in the *Amores* relate the progress of such a conventional love affair with a certain Corinna. They are insincere and lack personal feeling, for Corinna is a fictitious person. The *Heroides* contains letters supposed to have been written by women to their absent lovers or husbands.

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All these love poems are witty, cynical, and shrewd, but distinctly artificial.

Ovid's narrative and descriptive ability make his *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses* more entertaining than the love poems. The *Fasti* describes the festivals of the first six months of the Roman calendar. It gives us considerable information about Roman customs and beliefs. But the poem which assured Ovid immortality is the *Metamorphoses*, a collection of two hundred and forty-six tales concerning the transformations of persons into various forms. It begins with the creation and ends with the transfiguration of Julius Cæsar into a star. Hence it is a storehouse of such famous Greek and Roman myths as those of Narcissus, Dædalus and Icarus, and Pygmalion. For the poets from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century and for the painters of the Renaissance, the *Metamorphoses* was a source of inspiration. Ovid was an excellent story-teller, but, as Quintilian said, he was "too much in love with his own cleverness."

Very few lyrics written between the first and the fourteenth centuries have any great literary value. The poets imitated the classical authors or composed poems in elaborate verse forms. These were usually conventional in subject matter as well as artificial in style. A few hymns, like Cædmon's in Old English, were inspired by a sincere reverence. In *Widsith*, *Deor's*

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*Lament*, and *The Seafarer* the wanderings and hardships suffered by the early English are described. They also reflect the hardy spirit and the love for the sea, which urged these adventurers "to fare forth in search of the land of the stranger." The devotion to their lords and homes was another prominent characteristic of these people. In Old English there is practically no love poetry, for the sterner aspects of life occupied their attention. A very fine Middle English poem, *The Pearl*, laments the death of the poet's daughter.

The lyrics of Medieval France were principally love songs composed by the troubadours in Provence or the trouvères in northern France. The troubadour worshiped his lady from a distance in accordance with the rules of courtly love. *Often she was another's wife and seldom* gave him encouragement. Therefore, he complained about her indifference, pouring out his sighs in most complicated stanzas. These poems were sometimes sung by their authors but more frequently by professional entertainers called jongleurs. Everyone from the kings to the peasants indulged in this delightful pastime, for the poet received many honors.

The minnesingers were as highly esteemed at the various German courts. The most noted, Walther von der Vogelweide, wandered from court to court, entertaining his patrons with love

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lyrics or commemorating historical events in his political poetry. Altho Walther followed the conventions, he introduced a national element and some personal feeling. His appreciation for the beauties of nature gives a modern tone to such poems as *Unter den Linden*.

Walther has sometimes been compared with Francesco Petrarch, the master of the Italian sonnet. A sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines with a special rime scheme. Petrarch's sonnets have two sections, an octet stating an idea and a sextet making a direct application to some particular circumstance. The following sonnet, entitled "The Praise of Laura Transcends His Poetic Powers," shows his method:

Ashamed sometimes thy beauties should remain  
As yet unsung, sweet lady, in my rime;  
When first I saw thee I recall the time,  
Pleasing as none shall ever please again.  
But no fit polish can my verse attain,  
Not mine is strength to try the task sublime:  
My genius, measuring its power to climb,  
From such attempt doth prudently refrain.  
Full oft I oped my lips to chant thy name;  
Then in mid utterance the lay was lost:  
But say what muse can dare so bold a flight?  
Full oft I strove in measure to indite;  
But ah, the pen, the hand, the vein I boast,  
At once were vanquish'd by the mighty theme!

Altho Petrarch counted among his friends the most renowned scholars and the most powerful

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rulers of the time; he found little pleasure in the homage paid to him. The inspiration for his love poetry was Laura, whom he first saw in church at Avignon in 1327. He said, "What little I am, such as it is, I am through her." For twenty-one years he sang her praises or mourned her rebuffs in sonnets, canzoni, madrigali, ballati, and one long poem, *Trionfi*. He wrote in Italian instead of the scholarly Latin so that she might read his poems. At a smile from her, he was inspired with hopes; at a frown, he was plunged into despair.

Laura probably became for Petrarch a symbol for love. His poems resemble the conventional lyrics of the earlier poets with their stock similes and inevitable laments. In one line he expressed the central idea not only of his numerous imitators in every European literature but also of his medieval predecessors: "'Tis sweet to love and good to be undone."

François Villon might have written that line about his own experiences. Betrayed by a mistress, sentenced to be hanged for his connection with a notorious band of thieves, exiled from Paris several times for his escapades, and imprisoned by the Bishop of Orleans, he led an exciting life. He referred to its most colorful episodes in the *Petit Testament*, the *Grand Testament*, and the various ballades. Villon mastered so completely the form of the ballade with



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its recurring rimes and refrain that he could obtain the most varied effects from pathos to terror. By a phrase he suggests a whole scene or depicts a character. In his restricted sphere no writer has ever equaled him altho many have admired the technical versatility of the *Ballade of the Ladies of Former Time* with its exquisite refrain, "But where are the snows of yester-year?"

The first editor of Villon's poems was Clément Marot, the forerunner of the French Renaissance. He gave much attention to clearness in expression and gracefulness in style. Practically all of his poetry reflects the French gaiety of spirit. Hence in many ways he is more typical of his nation than many greater writers. His poems invariably commemorate some special occasion or compliment some person. They became models for the writers of light society verse, who wished to express fluently charming sentiments rather than to present weighty thoughts.

The Pléiade regarded Marot and his followers as uncultured because they were indifferent to the classical forms. The seven men composing this group aimed to raise the French language and literature to what they considered the high level of the classical literatures. Their leader, Pierre de Ronsard, started the movement with his *Odes*, patterned after the Horatian ode. These poems and his sonnets contain many fine

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passages, but Ronsard is primarily important because he reformed French poetry by his classical studies. As a poet, Joachim du Bellay was the most accomplished among the Pléiade. His *Sonnets to Olive* and *Les Antiquités de Rome*, the source for Spenser's *The Ruins of Rome*, are the most characteristic works of the French Renaissance.

The Pléiade were severely criticized by François de Malherbe, whose rigid adherence to the rules of regularity in language and meter deprived his poetry of any emotional appeal. For two centuries French poetry was so dominated by these rules that its verses became merely carefully revised exercises. Even André Chénier, guillotined during the French Revolution, was essentially classical. His eclogues, elegies, and odes have the artificialities in style which characterized the imitations of Greek and Latin lyrics. At times, however, he escaped sufficiently from the restricting conventions to infuse his poetry with an original vigor.

With similar aims to those of the French Pléiade, Boscan and Garcilasso attempted in the sixteenth century to reform Spanish poetry by introducing the Italian forms. In their odes, sonnets, and eclogues they imitated Petrarch and the other Italian humanists. This Italian influence upon Spanish poetry was extended by Gongora, who founded the artificial style called

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Gongorism. The elaborate constructions, coined words, and absurd tricks of this style make his poetry scarcely more than a clever combination of strange phrases and strained ideas.

The Italian sonnet reached England through the translations and imitations by Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. These men were experimenters, trying to adapt foreign meters to English usage. Finally, they developed the Elizabethan sonnet, a poem of four quatrains and a couplet. The verse forms and the conventional phrases, introduced by Wyatt and Surrey from France and Italy, became immediately popular with the Elizabethan poets, who composed sonnet sequences to honor some imaginary or actual counterpart of Petrarch's Laura. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* and Spenser's *Amoretti* have more poetic qualities than the average sequence, but even they are monotonous because the same idea is repeated again and again.

Spenser also wrote pastorals, hymns, and shorter lyrics. He tried to give *The Shepherd's Calendar* a rustic tone by using obsolete words or phrases from different dialects. The poems are allegorical and sometimes satirical. The *Complaints* and *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* find fault with the attitude of the court toward literature and attack the social customs.

The most discussed sonnets of the Elizabethan

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period are Shakespeare's. No one has ever satisfactorily determined whether they are merely conventional poems in a generally popular form or whether they refer to actual experiences in Shakespeare's life. Fortunately, to enjoy their unsurpassed poetic beauty it is not necessary to interpret them. Everyone can appreciate the artistic value of such sonnets as the following:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed whereon it must expire  
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.  
This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more  
strong,  
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Shakespeare's plays and those of other Elizabethan dramatists contain many fine songs. The minor poets seem to have had the lyric gift almost in equal measure with the more famous writers. The output was so great that anthologies of the choicest were published as early as 1600. Until the end of the seventeenth century the song-writers continued to enrich English

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literature with tuneful lyrics. Some, like Ben Jonson, sought models among the classical poets, while others still followed the traditions of the Renaissance. Professor Schelling has collected the best in his *Elizabethan Lyrics* and *Seventeenth-Century Lyrics*. Among the latter are such well-known poems as Ben Jonson's "Drink to me only with thine eyes"; John Donne's "Hymn to the Father," one of the great poems of religious feeling in the language; George Wither's "The Lover's Resolution"; Robert Herrick's "To Daffodils" and "Corinna's Going a-Maying"; Thomas Carew's "Ask me no more where Jove bestows"; Edmund Waller's "Go, lovely Rose"; John Suckling's "Why so pale and wan, fair lover"; Richard Lovelace's "To Lucasta, going to the Wars," and "To Althea, from Prison"; and John Dryden's "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day, 1687." From this very inadequate list the reader can see that the seventeenth-century lyric expressed every mood from the lightest amorous flirtation to deepest religious devotion.

Milton's early poems were also endued with the lyrical spirit of the century. *The Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso* have been universally acclaimed for their restraint and majestic lines. *Lycidas*, an elegy upon the death of Edward King, is the noblest poem of commemoration in the English

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language. The sonnets express Milton's Puritan philosophy, which is summed up in the last line of "On His Blindness"—"They also serve who only stand and wait." He believed we are ever in "the great task-master's eye."

Joost van den Vondel is often referred to as the Dutch Milton because he published in 1654 a drama entitled *Lucifer*. Altho he wrote a number of dramas upon Biblical themes and contemporary subjects, he was primarily a lyric poet. He won early recognition in his youth for his satirical lyrics upon current beliefs. Moreover, the choral songs are the most elevated passages in his dramas. His poems deal with religious devotion, children, and nature, for which he had a deeper appreciation than many poets of his century.

A number of English poets in the eighteenth century discovered that nature was more than a background for man. James Thomson was the pioneer among them, for he brought with him from Scotland some verses on nature when he came to London in 1725. His descriptions in the *Seasons* prove that he had observed nature carefully. The poem, however, lacks freshness because of its elaborate classical diction and didactic tone.

This restraint in style also limited Thomas Gray's poems. Despite its many admirable lines, *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

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seems studied, for Gray tried too hard to attain perfection. In spirit, however, he was romantic, since he was interested in the "mute inglorious Miltons," the beauty of natural scenery, and the supernatural elements in the Norse and Celtic legends. *The Bard*, based on a Welsh story, illustrates the conflict of the two natures in Gray. Its theme is romantic, but its form is that of a Pindaric ode. Commenting on this conflict, Matthew Arnold said that Gray was "chilled into silence by an age of prose." It was rather his own scholarly reserve that chilled his poetry.

William Collins treated his subjects in a similarly abstract fashion. As Swinburne pointed out, his odes are extremely musical, but his range is narrow. His poems resemble carefully developed symphonies upon various moods. Collins was a dreamer sensitive to criticism and melancholy by nature. When his volume failed, he threw into the fire a number of unsold copies and wrote little more.

Another poet afflicted with melancholy was William Cowper, who tried several times to commit suicide. His religious experiences tended to deepen this mood, as his hymns "Oh! for a closer walk with God" and "God moves in a mysterious way" indicate. What little happiness he had, came from the quiet evenings he spent with intimate friends at the home of

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Mary Unwin in Olney. One of these friends suggested to him the subject of *The Task* and told him the humorous story of John Gilpin. Cowper described in an intimate, personal style the unimportant incidents of his daily life in the country to please himself rather than to gain an audience. Yet this personal attitude has brought him many readers among those who have little interest in poetry.

George Crabbe wrote *The Village*, *The Borough*, and *Tales of the Hall* in protest against the idealistic pictures of country life in the pastorals and in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. He drew his characters and scenes from his own observations as a village curate, emphasizing the hopelessness and grimness of conditions. In fact, his poems are frequently marred by too many realistic details and rough verses. They are original and powerful but not very pleasing.

The most original poems of the eighteenth century are the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience* by William Blake. From his earliest boyhood Blake had lived in an imaginative world. Everything for him had a spiritual significance, which he expressed in mystical poems and vivid engravings. With childlike simplicity he questioned the lamb and the tiger concerning their Maker or related his strange visions. Blake was misunderstood in his own day, but gradu-



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ally his tender pathos and marvelous happiness are bringing him recognition.

Everyone knows the lyrics of Robert Burns, the poet of the common man. In the preface to his poems he said he purposed to "sing the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language." When he forgot this purpose and tried to imitate contemporary English poetry, he failed. Burns belonged to the Scotch peasantry, whose pleasures he described in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. From the fields and the taverns he obtained material for such sympathetic and humorous portrayals of this humble life as *To a Mountain Daisy*, *To a Mouse*, *Tam O'Shanter*, and *The Jolly Beggars*. He could, however, be satirical when his scorn was aroused. *Holy Willie's Prayer* and *The Holy Fair* ridicule the Calvinism preached by the Auld Kirk because it considered man a lost soul and held continually before him the terrors of Hell.

Burns wrote about three hundred songs ranging from convivial drinking songs to stirring patriotic hymns. Sometimes he revised old songs or used their themes for new poems; more often he composed new songs for old Scotch airs. Their success is due to their simplicity and to their emotional appeal, for Burns aimed to touch the heart in *Auld Lang Syne*, *Coming through the*

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*Rye, Sweet Afton*, and the numerous other familiar songs.

While these poets were preparing the way for the romantic revival in England, a struggle between classicism and nationalism was taking place in German lyrical poetry. Johann Gottfried Herder contributed to the nationalist movement with his *Voices of the Nations in Songs*; a collection of early lyrics and ballads from many nations. This book aroused an interest in the past by proving to the German people that their folk-poetry compared favorably with that of other nations.

Goethe and Schiller endeavored in their lyrics to reconcile the Greek ideals with the modern spirit. Goethe's *Herman and Dorothea* treats a provincial love story in a classical manner, while Schiller's *To Joy* is an emotional hymn in the form of an ode. The love lyrics and the ballads of both poets often deal with nature or medieval legends in a somewhat freer style, but they are not entirely liberated from a classical restraint or moralizing tendency. Schiller's philosophical lyrics, stating his ideal of ultimate peace through spiritual aspiration, are his finest poems.

Thus during the last half of the eighteenth century new forces were appearing in European literature. These finally brought a complete revolt from classicism both in subject matter and form. The whole spirit of the age had changed.

## XXX

### THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL

THE romantic revival was primarily a movement for freedom of expression in literature. The poets treated their material subjectively and explained frankly their emotional experiences. The characteristics of the movement were a return to nature, a use of the supernatural, a sympathetic treatment of the commonplace, an interest in the medieval legends, a revolt against conventions, and an experimenting with new meters. The finish and exactness of eighteenth-century poetry were severely condemned as coldly artificial. In their attempt to be natural the romantic poets sometimes went to such extremes that their work has little value. But, when they forgot their theories and became inspired by their feelings, they wrote some of the most splendid poetry in all literature.

The romantic movement began in England with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798. Wordsworth had been in sympathy with the French Revolution until the reign of terror. The excesses of that period disillusioned him and caused him to despair of mankind. He recovered his faith in man while he was living in the lake country with

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his sister Dorothy. Wandering about the country lanes and talking to the peasants, he discovered that simplicity and truth are more valuable than social theories. At this time he met Coleridge, whom he declared to be the only wonderful man he knew. On a walking trip they discussed poetry and decided to publish a volume together. This was the *Lyrical Ballads*.

Wordsworth chose the ordinary incidents of humble life and gave them a spiritual significance. In simple language he described the impressions made upon him by the persons and natural objects he had observed. From the most trivial events he derived some lesson. This moralizing tendency increased so that the poems of his later years are practically sermons. Matthew Arnold selected about one-fourth of Wordsworth's poetry as worthy to be preserved. *Tintern Abbey*, *Intimations of Immortality*, *Ode to Duty*, *Michael*, and the short lyrics are the most characteristic expressions of Wordsworth's faith in nature and the virtue of common man.

Coleridge dealt with the supernatural in such a manner that he made it real. In *Christabel* and the *Ancient Mariner* he created an air of mystery by means of a medieval atmosphere and suggestive descriptions. The effect of the *Ancient Mariner* is spoiled by the moral at the end. Coleridge recognized this fact, for he wrote to

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a friend, "Madam, the fault of the poem is that it has too much moral." The magic of his verse is most impressive in *Kubla Khan*, beginning with the sonorous lines:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.

Scott is not a great poet, but he rendered romantic poetry an important service by collecting Scotch ballads and publishing them in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. His own poems, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and *The Lady of the Lake*, relate stories of the border in an easy but at times monotonous narrative style. This quality, however, brought them considerable popular success with readers who found the other poets of the period too difficult. It is said that Scott stopped writing poetry because his popularity was overshadowed by that of Byron.

Lord Byron was so proud of his aristocratic ancestry that he felt he was conferring an honor upon literature by writing poetry. Therefore, he entitled his first volume, *Hours of Idleness*, which *The Edinburgh Review* criticized harshly but in general justly. Byron replied with his satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Altho these youthful poems have some of

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Byron's fire, they did not attract much attention. His fame dated from the publication of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, describing a two-years' trip on the Continent.

In 1816 Byron left England forever on account of the malicious rumors concerning him. After several years of adventures in Switzerland and Italy, he decided to aid the Greeks in their war for independence, but he died of fever before he could distinguish himself in battle. Byron posed as a wicked man because he hated hypocrisy, which he considered to be the dominating trait of society. His stormy passion and injudicious revelations concerning his private life shocked the English. They could not understand a poet who declared that virtue is hypocrisy and that man counted for little in the scheme of the universe. He even told them that Waterloo accomplished nothing. Byron expressed European ideas rather than English ones. Consequently his reputation on the Continent has always been very great, and he has had many followers among the European poets.

His poetry was inspired either by the spirit of adventure or the spirit of revolt against artificiality. He wrote hastily and carelessly but vigorously. The wilder aspects of nature, such as the mountains and the storms, appealed

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to him. With enthusiasm he described their grandeur:

The sky is changed,—and such a change! O night  
And storm and darkness! Ye are wondrous strong,  
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light  
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along  
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,  
Leaps the live thunder.

Byron's heroes in the *Giaour*, the *Corsair*, *Lara*, the *Prisoner of Chillon*, and the other romantic narratives reflect the different sides of his nature. The dramas, *Manfred* and *Cain*, proclaim the Byronic despair and defiance of the world. But all his moods and his complete philosophy are expressed in his masterpiece, *Don Juan*. It is Byron's final revenge upon the society which repudiated him. His statement, "I am of the opposition," might be placed upon the title-page of his volumes to indicate his attitude toward poetry and toward life.

Shelley was another poet of revolt, attempting to liberate the mind from the bonds of convention. He was dismissed from Oxford for writing a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*. He married Harriet Westbrook because he wished to free her from the discipline of an uncongenial home, and he deserted her to run away with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, since he did not believe in the restraint of marriage. Later he was aroused by Emilia Viviani's

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imprisonment in a convent to write *Epipsy-chidion*. Anyone who seemed to be the victim of injustice gained his sympathies.

By the *Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound* he hoped to bring about a reform in society so that the individual might have more freedom. He looked upon the Greek War as marking the dawn of a new age. When he discovered that his ideals were unattainable, he was dejected. He was a seeker for an indefinable beauty, or as Matthew Arnold said, "a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain."

The manifestations of this beauty he found in nature, which inspired such supreme lyrics as *To a Skylark*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *The Sensitive Plant*, and *The Cloud*. In his lyrics he endeavored to convey an impression of his visionary world. Hence many of his most beautiful lines are vague and suggestive rather than explicit. Only a poet who had heard ethereal music could write those sublime lines from *Adonais*, an elegy on the death of Keats:

Life like a dome of many-colored glass  
Stains the white radiance of eternity.

In a letter written to a friend Keats exclaimed, "Oh for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!" Hence it is not strange that his creed should have been:



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Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

He found beauty in classical myths, in medieval legends, and in nature. Much of his poetry is pagan in tone, depicting a sensuous mood in colorful and imaginative language. By his masterful word-painting he produced the classical severity of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and the medieval atmosphere of *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

Keats had no theories to expound. He merely expressed his feelings about the beautiful things he saw or heard. Even the narrative poems place more emphasis upon the hero's emotions than upon his actions. Perhaps Keats would have followed Shelley's advice to write more seriously, had he lived beyond his twenty-sixth year, for the unfinished *Hyperion* indicates a more thoughtful attitude. The difference between these two poets may be seen from a comparison of Shelley's *To a Skylark* and Keats's *To a Nightingale*. Keats appeals almost entirely to the senses by his vivid phrases, as in the lines:

Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

The music of words had as powerful a charm for Poe. By repetitions and refrains he gained his weird effects. He was a poet of moods, often sad or despairing, as in *The Raven* and *Annabel Lee*. His poems also revealed his passionate de-

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votion to beauty, for he believed that poetry should be the "rhythmical creation of beauty." In the *Poetic Principle* he declared that "the value of a poem is in ratio to its exciting element." He was cold and intellectual, carefully planning his poetry to gain this desired effect. Yet his excellence of form and the haunting qualities of his melodies make many of his forty-five poems unforgettable.

The French romanticists criticized Béranger for his adherence to the conventional style. Yet he may be classed with them, since his ballads and popular songs expressed the natural feelings of the common people. His wit, pathos, common sense, and patriotism gained him an enormous audience, chiefly among the unliterary. He was several times sent to prison by the restored monarchy for his political songs, especially those on the Napoleonic legend. He was equally successful in writing a vigorous ballad like *The King of Yvetot* or a sentimental poem like *My Old Coat!*

Lamartine's *Meditations* were more important in French poetry because of their treatment of nature. Lamartine is a sentimentalist following in the footsteps of Rousseau and Chateaubriand. His melancholy tone and tenderness are sincere, but his poetry lacks originality and vigor. He has been read for his melodious verse rather than for his sentiments.

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Another poet who anticipated the more pronounced romanticists is Alfred de Vigny. The technical finish of his poems is admirable, but they are somewhat insincere and cold. These qualities, as well as his pessimism, account for his limited appeal.

The leader of the romantic school was Victor Hugo. His dozen successive volumes, beginning with *Odes and Ballads* published in 1826 and ending with *The Art of Being a Grandfather* published in 1881, contain the finest lyrical and narrative poetry in French literature. These poems deal with a great variety of subjects ranging from colorful Oriental tales to simple rustic scenes. They were inspired by Hugo's faith in the goodness of God and his optimistic view of life. "No poet," says Saintsbury, "has a rarer and more delicate touch of pathos, none a more imperious command of awe, of the vague, of the supernatural aspects of nature." Even when he is sentimental and melodramatic, we are impressed with his sincerity.

Two disciples of Hugo are Théophile Gautier and Alfred de Musset. The poetry of Gautier is remarkable for its formal perfection. He had studied art before he had turned to writing, and from that study had acquired a sense of form. One volume he called *Emaux et Camées* (*Enamels and Cameos*), a title suggesting his exact finish. Musset, on the other hand, wrote

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very carelessly, giving little attention to diction. He had something of the Byronic passion, which found early expression in his *Tales of Spain and Italy*. His lyrics are characterized by a reflective and rather melancholy tone.

The principal figure among the younger French romantic poets was Charles Baudelaire. He had more in common with Poe, whose works he translated, than with the French poets. His *Flowers of Evil* and *Short Poems in Prose* contain analyses of the less common moods and passions. They are notable for their unconventional treatment of sense impressions and somber thoughts. Hugo said that Baudelaire "created a new shudder."

In Italy the tradition of Petrarch was carried on by Giacomo Leopardi in his patriotic odes. He looked to the past, exclaiming,

Wake the dead,  
Since the quick sleep; bid the old heroes rise  
And scourge with their tongues, until this vain  
And rotting age, revitalized, shall rush  
To emulate their deeds, or learn to blush.

Altho Leopardi was pessimistic in his view of human indifference, he found, like Wordsworth, comfort in nature. Undoubtedly the fact that he was a secluded invalid affected to some extent his attitude toward mankind.

The leaders of the romantic movement in

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Germany also endeavored to revive the glory of the past by their ballads based on folk-lore. Johann Ludwig Uhland's ballads and patriotic songs did much to forward this movement, for he was fired by the nationalistic spirit. But Uhland was soon surpassed by Heinrich Heine, who treated the material more subjectively.

Heine prefaced one of his volumes with the following poem:

In this volume I have set  
All my anguish, all my fret;  
Open it, and thou shalt see  
All my heart laid bare to thee.

These verses indicate his tendency to emphasize his own unhappiness. Whether he was writing descriptions of natural scenery or retelling an old legend, he was chiefly concerned with his own emotions. Often his lyrics are weakened by an excessive sentimentality or a cynical or satirical line. At times he even ridiculed his emotional reactions in a spirit of irony. Yet he is the most widely-known lyric poet of Germany, because he definitely portrays his feelings. His songs are free from the vague spirituality characteristic of German poetry.

The interest in national origins also inspired the poets in the other countries of Northern Europe. Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger used the legends of Denmark for his heroic dramas, which

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brought him immediate recognition as the greatest Danish poet. In 1829 he was crowned laureate of the Scandinavian countries by Bishop Tegnér. His dramatic poem, *Aladdin*, was attacked by the adherents of the classical school, but Oehlenschläger triumphed over his opponents, as his romantic enthusiasm for the past appealed to his countrymen.

Longfellow wrote in a preface to his translations from Bishop Tegnér's work: "He is the glory and boast of Sweden and stands first among all her poets living or dead." His best-known work is *Frithjof's Saga*, a modernization of an old Scandinavian story. The chief characteristic of Tegnér's poetry is its joyous spirit, which came from his Hellenistic studies.

Tegnér's younger contemporary, Johann Ludwig Runeberg, was a Finn. He chose his subjects from rural Finnish life and treated them realistically. His most famous work is *Ensign Stol's Stories*, containing patriotic ballads and tales of the Russo-Finnish war. His popularity was second only to that of Tegnér.

The national poet of Poland is Adam Mickiewicz. He took the main theme for his *Ancestors* from Lithuanian folk-lore but added personal comments upon Polish history. On account of his activities in politics he was finally exiled. His patriotic poem, *Master Thaddeus*, presents the

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finest elements in the Polish character and has been an inspiration to his nation.

The romantic spirit of revolt spread even to Russia, whose greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin, was banished to the Caucasus after he had written some odes extolling freedom. Before his exile from St. Petersburg, he had produced a romantic epic, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, and some lyrical poetry. The latter is filled with personal feeling concerning his schoolfellows, his adventures in the capital, and his love affairs. Its general tone betrays his French training, for he often idealizes his emotions.

While he was in the Caucasus, he read Byron's poetry. The results of his enthusiasm for the English poet were *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*, patterned after *Childe Harold*; some narrative tales; and *Evgeni Onegin*, a novel in verse, for which *Don Juan* was the model. Another English poet who influenced Pushkin was Shakespeare. *Boris Godunov* is a historical tragedy, derived from *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, and *Henry IV*.

Pushkin learned from his old nurse many Russian folk-tales. These furnished him themes for poetry and prose tales. In his later period he became more objective and impersonal. His masterpiece is *The Bronze Horseman*, the story of a clerk crazed by the loss of his sweetheart in a flood. This work has been called the greatest poem in the Russian language. Pushkin's direct

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and clear style had a very beneficial effect upon Russian literature.

Another Russian disciple of Byron was Michael Lermontov. He also resembled Shelley in his idealism and longing for a congenial world. His failure to realize his ideals made him pessimistic. He is the wanderer who is the chief character of his poem, *The Demon*. The background for many of Lermontov's poems and his novel, *A Hero of our Days*, is the Caucasus. In his psychological study of the Russian soul he anticipated the realistic novelists.

Thus the movement started in England by the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 spread in different forms throughout European literature. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, there began a reaction against the subjective method of the romanticists. Preoccupation with personal emotions was replaced in poetry by a consideration for other people. The realistic present and its problems assumed greater interest than the romantic past.



## XXXI

### POETRY OF THE LAST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

THE last half of the nineteenth century was a period of far-reaching political, industrial, and social changes brought about largely by new inventions and by greater facilities for education. It was an age of materialistic development, marked by enormous expansion. Man controlled forces which he had never dreamed existed. New economic theories had to be formulated for the new conditions. But even more important were the scientific discoveries, which threatened all the old beliefs. The confusion resulting from all these changes affected directly or indirectly the poetry of the period.

The appointment of Tennyson as poet laureate upon the death of Wordsworth in 1850 was most appropriate, because he expressed the attitude of the English middle class toward the new developments. In *Locksley Hall* he reviews the social and political conditions and enthusiastically states his faith in the future, when "the federation of the world" shall bring order out of the confusion and "the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law." Tennyson believed that the poet should be a practical guide

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for his generation, interpreting life and directing thought by his wise counsels. No matter what his subject might be, he used it to convey a message to his age. *Ænone* and *Ulysses*, for example, are classical only in subject matter. The first teaches the importance of "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control"; the second stresses the value of an active life.

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use,—  
As tho to breathe were life!

The *Idyls of the King* is a modernization of the medieval legends for the purpose of teaching morality. Tennyson's knights are Victorian gentlemen, and his Arthur is virtue personified. If the poet had been able to appreciate the medieval spirit, he might have made the *Idyls* a great epic. Instead he weakened the vigor of his source, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, by his sentimentalizing.

Tennyson began *In Memoriam* to express his personal grief when his friend Hallam died. This event turned his attention to the question of immortality. The 131 lyrics composing this poem were written during a period of seventeen years, while Tennyson was gradually progressing from religious doubt to the conviction that all creation moves toward God. Because *In Memoriam* gave expression to the religious faith of the age, it became his most popular poem.

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Altho Tennyson's philosophy and moral teachings may have little interest for future generations, he will always be read for the beauty of his verse. He was a great lyric artist, taking infinite pains to write perfectly. Even his dullest poems contain musical passages, such as the songs in *The Princess*:

Sweet and low, sweet and low,  
Wind of the western sea,  
Low, low, breathe and blow,  
Wind of the western sea!  
Over the rolling waters go,  
Come from the dying moon, and blow,  
Blow him again to me;  
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

As Tennyson taught Victorian England faith, so Browning taught her courage. He was ever a fighter with the firm conviction that victory would be the reward of the brave. His optimistic philosophy that right will finally triumph is the keynote of his poetry. Nowhere has he better stated this philosophy than in *Prospice*:

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,  
The mist in my face,  
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote  
I am nearing the place,  
The power of the night, the press of the storm,  
The post of the foe;  
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,  
Yet the strong man must go:  
For the journey is done and the summit attained,  
And the barriers fall,

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Tho a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
The reward of it all.  
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
The best and the last!  
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and  
forbore,  
And bade me creep past.  
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers  
The heroes of old,  
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
Of pain, darkness and cold.  
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,  
The black minute's at end,  
And the elements rage, the fiend-voices that rave,  
Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,  
Then a light, then thy breast,  
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
And with God be the rest!

Browning never attained Tennyson's popularity with his contemporaries because his meaning is not immediately clear. He poured forth his ideas without restraint in a cryptic style. The dramatic lyrics, dramatic romances, and similar poems, in which he deftly depicts a mood or subtly portrays a character, are his best work. The Italian Renaissance, Jewish history, and medieval Christianity furnished Browning with the historical figures for these studies. From his vast reading he acquired a thorough understanding of the times when they lived. Hence he has presented them with rare insight and sympathy. *My Last Duchess, Soliloquy of a Spanish Clois-*

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*ter, Love among the Ruins, Saul, In a Gondola, Andrea del Sarto, The Bishop Orders His Tomb, Abt Vogler, and Rabbi Ben Ezra* are excellent examples of Browning's method of using the dramatic monolog. He later employed this form for his long narrative poem, *The Ring and the Book*, which gives an account of a murder from twelve different points of view. His ability in characterization finally won for Browning the consideration he deserved.

For several years before Elizabeth Barrett met Browning she had admired his poetry. This admiration led to a literary correspondence, a meeting, and finally marriage. Inspired by her love for her husband, she wrote her finest poetry, the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Her other poetry shows her scholarly attainments and sincere feeling, but is marred by awkward constructions. *The Cry of the Children*, a vigorous protest against the employment of children in factories, brought Mrs. Browning considerable fame because it reflected the humanitarian feeling of the age, which considered her an equal of Tennyson.

Altho Matthew Arnold referred in his essays to political and social conditions, he took the themes for his narrative poetry from the past. Since he had studied the ancient literatures extensively at Oxford, he patterned his poems after the epic and elegy. *Sohrab and Rustum, Balder Dead, and Tristram and Iseult* retell in

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a restrained-classical manner stories taken respectively from Persian folk-lore, Scandinavian mythology, and medieval romance. In such lyrics as *The Buried Life* and *Dover Beach* he regrets the loss of the serene assurance that the past possessed. His poetry has the intellectual qualities of austerity and precision but lacks the ardor of spontaneous emotion.

Edward FitzGerald was also a student of Persian literature, from which he translated so excellently the *Rubaiyât of Omar Khayyâm* that it has been considered an original masterpiece. He reproduced perfectly the melancholy tone and sensuous beauty of Omar's verse. The poem's fatalistic philosophy advises enjoyment of pleasure while it lasts, since the future is uncertain.

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring  
The winter garment of Repentance fling:  
The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.

The *Rubaiyât* attracted little attention before Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his friends pointed out its fine qualities. Rossetti belonged to the group of painters known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Their aim was to return to the naturalness of early Italian painting. Consequently color and imagery predominate in his poems. Another quality resulting from Rossetti's admiration of the Middle Ages is the super-

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natural element, which gives to his ballads an atmosphere of mystery and to his religious poetry a mystical spirituality. His love sonnets, *The House of Life*, are the finest Petrarchian sonnets in the English language.

William Morris, another member of the Brotherhood, sought to bring beauty into the Victorian home by his designs for furniture, wall-paper, and other house-furnishings. For this purpose he established Morris and Company. His discontent with modern conditions prompted him to make addresses on social problems and to describe a Utopia in his prose romance, *News from Nowhere*. Despite these varied activities he found time to write a large amount of poetry, chiefly on medieval and classical subjects. His *Defense of Guinevere* and *The Life and Death of Jason* show how thoroughly he understood the spirit of the past. His most sustained effort is *The Earthly Paradise*, which contains twenty-four tales from Greek and Northern sources. If Morris had written less with more care, his literary reputation might have equaled that of his two friends, Rossetti and Swinburne.

No other English poet has employed with such perfect success so many different meters as Swinburne. This facility in handling irregular rhythms he acquired from his study of Italian and French poetry. He was an ardent disciple of Victor Hugo, whom he called "the

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spiritual sovereign of the nineteenth century." Hence he was devoted to the cause of individual liberty, attacking all restraint. His disregard for conventions and his pagan spirit in *Hertha* and *The Garden of Proserpine* probably prevented his appointment as poet laureate at the death of Tennyson. The earth goddess, Hertha, declares:

I am that which began;  
Out of me the years roll;  
Out of me God and man;  
I am equal and whole;  
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily;  
I am the Soul.

Swinburne was a poet of the open air and the sea, for they were to him symbols of freedom. He wrote, "I will go back to the great sweet mother, mother and lover of men, the sea." Often his melodious verses recall the majestic music of the waves or the harmonies of the wind. His treatment resembles that of a musician composing a great symphony.

The Victorian age was shocked at his *Poems and Ballads* but read them with considerable interest because they departed from the traditional forms. Before their publication he had written several dramas, including *Atalanta in Calydon*, the choruses of which had brought him instant recognition as a great lyric poet. That he also had narrative ability is proved by his *Tris-*



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*tram of Lyonesse*, a vivid retelling of an Arthurian romance. Thus Swinburne's versatile genius makes him the last important poet of the period.

With the exception of Whitman the nineteenth-century American poets generally followed the English tradition. Some described American scenes or used local dialects, but they were clearly influenced by their English predecessors and contemporaries in the treatment of their subjects. Their poetry has little originality of thought and few distinguishing qualities. They wrote a quantity of good verse but few superior poems.

The most widely read of these poets was Longfellow, the laureate of the American fireside. *Hiawatha*, *Miles Standish*, *Evangeline*, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, and the other ballads appealed to his readers because they told pathetic or humorous stories in a simple style. Furthermore, Longfellow's sentimental platitudes and sermons in rime, like *The Psalm of Life*, encouraged his generation with an optimistic philosophy. He also brought the culture and romance of the European literatures to America by his numerous translations, which often surpass his original poems. The most important is his faithful rendering of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. He taught the New England Puritans that the beautiful is not necessarily evil and may even convey a spiritual message.

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Whittier wrote his poetry primarily for this purpose. He was a reformer, pointing out the hardships suffered by the poor and endeavoring to arouse the nation to the inhumanity of slavery. He said: "I set a higher value on my name as appended to the anti-slavery declaration of 1833 than on the title-page of any book." In his denunciation of slavery this gentle Quaker was never bitter or tactless like many abolitionists. He was a prophet voicing his righteous indignation against an evil which was threatening the spiritual life of the nation.

His songs of labor and ballads were inspired by his admiration for Burns. He understood the problems and feelings of the humble man almost as well as the Scotch poet, but he did not have Burns's poetic gift. Even *Snow-Bound* has diffuse passages and prosaic lines, altho these faults are overshadowed by the effectiveness of the simple descriptions and natural atmosphere. Whittier stated his greatest handicap when he said, "The gods have made me most unmusical." He might have added that they had also failed to give him a sense of humor.

The only New England poet gifted with this admirable quality was Holmes. In *The Height of the Ridiculous* he tells how one of his poems sent his servant into a fit of hysterical laughter lasting ten days. "And since," he said, "I never dare to write as funny as I can." He wrote about

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one hundred and thirty poems for special occasions, such as class reunions or the welcome of visitors to Boston. These are amazingly clever and sometimes mildly satirical. The humor in his well-known poem, *The One Hoss Shay*, is due chiefly to the imitation of the Yankee dialect.

Lowell also used this dialect in his *Biglow Papers*, two series of satires on American politics during the Mexican War and the Civil War. In these witty poems he crystallized the opinion of an influential section of the American public. *A Fable for Critics* contains some interesting comments about contemporary American writers and states his own faults. The most outstanding is his tendency to moralize. *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, for example, preaches the importance of duty. Lowell believed that poetry should have a definite aim and should not be written merely to please the ear with its melody.

Contemporary with these poets but belonging in spirit to a younger generation was Walt Whitman, the prophet and pioneer of free verse. As a printer, carpenter, school-teacher, editor, war nurse in the hospitals, and government clerk he had come into contact with all classes and types. He gloried in his companionship with the laboring man, whom he praised in *I Hear America Singing*. He was the poet of the masses, but unfortunately they found his poetry too difficult to read. His *Leaves of Grass* challenged his gen-

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eration by its intense realism and unconventionality to take an original view of American life. He often shouted his message at the top of his voice, for he was determined to be heard in his protest against the falseness in life and literature.

Whitman's poetry is very uneven. Much of it is diffuse and wordy with confusing details and incoherent jumbles of names. Yet at times he wrote most impressively, as in *When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloomed* and *O Captain! My Captain*, the finest tributes to Lincoln in American poetry. Finally the "Good Gray Poet" has received recognition as a sincere and truly representative American poet.

Lanier's *Psalm of the West* rivals Whitman's *Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood* as an expression of the democratic spirit. Lanier was a Southerner who had a remarkable talent for music. He wrote only a small amount of poetry, but his lyrics entitle him to be considered among the important American poets. Only a sensitive artist gifted with a vivid imagination could produce the beautiful descriptions in *Sunrise* and *The Marshes of Glynn*. The closing lines of *The Symphony* state Lanier's faith:

And yet shall Love himself be heard,  
Tho long deferred, tho long deferred;  
O'er the modern waste a dove hath whirred:  
Music is love in search of a word.

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The French Romanticists were followed by the Parnassians, who emphasized objectivity and the importance of form. Under the leadership of Leconte de Lisle they endeavored to be impersonal and neutral toward their subjects. They frequently took their themes from antiquity, as they scorned the modern era. Thus, José-María de Herédia covers practically the whole historical past in his sonnets, *Les Trophées*. Altho several Parnassians wrote excellent verse, they have been generally surpassed by the Symbolists.

The Symbolists were individualists reproducing their visions in verses freed from all restrictions of form. The recognized leader of the school was Paul Verlaine, who explained his principles in *Art Poétique*. In his early poems he imitated Baudelaire and Leconte de Lisle and in his later volumes wrote some dull poetry, but his lyrical gift and frankness give many poems an original spontaneity.

Stéphane Mallarmé also stressed the value of musical language. Like Poe, whom he translated, he chose words specifically for their effect. The connotation or suggestive quality of words assumed for him major importance. Hence his poetry is often obscure. He said: "To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem, which consists in the pleasure of guessing little by little. To suggest, that is the dream." He gives impressions rather

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than definite ideas. Since he had a retiring nature, his poetry has little contact with life.

In 1884, Verlaine published his *Les Poètes Maudits* to call attention to Mallarmé and especially Arthur Rimbaud. The latter had written a small volume of poetry before he was nineteen, and had then given up literature. During the rest of his life he wandered about the world in quest of adventure. He was a visionary, seeking to penetrate the unknown and recalling his visions in the striking images of *Les Illuminations*. Altho Gourmont dismissed him as a "freak of nature," Rimbaud's genius has been appreciated by a few in every succeeding generation.

The most prominent poet in Italy during the last half of the nineteenth century was Giosue Carducci. He owed his debt to the Italian classics, from which he believed the intellectual heritage of Italy should develop. He detested romanticism as a foreign importation. His lyrics, especially those in *Levia Gravia* and *Odi Barbare*, express his opinions and prejudices concerning politics and religion. His poetry is severe in form, for he was a classicist disdaining the facility and sentimentality of his immediate predecessors.

In the literatures of northern Europe no poet attained particular distinction during this period except the Danish writer, Holger Henrik Drachmann. His chief interest was marine life,

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which he had painted before he wrote his poems about sailors and fishermen. As he never ceased to study the sea at first hand, his poetry is realistic and vigorous.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, poetry became more and more impressionistic. The French poets who succeeded the Symbolists and the followers of Oscar Wilde in England proudly called themselves the Decadents. They were primarily concerned with the expression of their own personalities and sensibilities. They wrote for themselves, caring little whether or not the world was interested in their revelations. As these were somewhat astounding, the Decadents gained a notorious popularity for a time. But their work is too morbid and too artificial to have a permanent appeal.

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THE most striking fact concerning the recent poetic revival is that several poets have become best sellers. The reasons for this success are threefold. In the first place, contemporary poets write naturally, avoiding stilted phraseology and difficult symbolism. They make a definite attempt to be clear and exact in expression even when they employ figurative language. Then, they treat their subjects realistically, whether they choose them from contemporary life or from the past. Finally, they have reflected the modern spirit of restlessness in their freedom from all conventional restraints. They consider any theme and any form suitable for poetry. Hence the twentieth-century poets have brought new vitality to their art.

These new theories, however, had very little effect upon some poets, who continued to write in the older manner. Altho the major portion of Thomas Hardy's poetry was published after 1900, it is in some respects more Victorian than his later novels. The same note of sadness recurs again and again. Hardy finds the misery suffered by man inexplicable; God seems indifferent to humanity. He is a philosophical poet pondering



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upon the littleness of man. His great epic drama in one hundred and thirty scenes, *The Dynasts*, portrays the struggle against the Immanent Will. The enormous amount of detail frequently destroys the smoothness and weakens the dramatic power of his verse.

While Hardy observed modern life philosophically, John Masefield actively participated in it. He says in *Biography*:

By many waters and on many ways  
I have known golden instants and bright days.

When he was working in a carpet factory in Yonkers, he read Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* and decided to become a poet. Like his master, he is a poet of action with considerable narrative and dramatic ability. The sea, rural life, and the unfortunate are his main themes. He states his purpose thus: "I desire to interpret life both by reflecting it as it appears and by portraying its outcome." He accomplished this aim by vivid scenes and impressive contrasts, especially in the narrative poems: *The Everlasting Mercy*, *The Widow in the Bye-Street*, *Dauber*, and *Reynard the Fox*. Masefield has also retold the Arthurian legends in *Tristan and Isolt* and *Midsummer Night*. Altho these versions do not have the majesty of the old poetry, they are admirable for their directness. At least he does not modernize the characters in Tennysonian fash-

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ion. Masefield's worst faults are his diffuseness and overemphasis on coarseness. He would be a greater poet if he were more restrained and careful. Yet he has served his art well by making poetry popular through his treatment of life as it is.

Another writer who has advanced the cause of poetry is Alfred Noyes. He believes that poetry will dominate the future as religion has dominated the past and as science is dominating the present. Noyes has a rare understanding of human emotions, to which he appeals by his stories of adventure and loyalty. He has recreated the Elizabethan period in *Drake* and *Tales of the Mermaid Tavern*. His ballads are as spirited as their fifteenth-century models. To his contemporaries he exclaims: "O, you have sung a new song, but I will sing an old." He criticizes modern life for its lack of the spiritual element and preaches an optimistic faith. Perhaps he becomes too argumentative and sentimental about the past, but he is a very salutary voice. Furthermore, his long musical lines have caused many readers to appreciate poetry.

Ireland's greatest poet, William Butler Yeats, also found his inspiration in the past. The mysterious elements of the Irish legends exerted a powerful attraction for him. Mysticism is the chief quality of his own lyrics, vaguely expressing in beautiful language his disappointment

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and longing. He stands aloof from modern life because it offers so little that satisfies him. All the poets of the Celtic Renaissance have this longing for a more spiritual world. "A. E." (George W. Russell) turned to Eastern Philosophy, and James Stephens to the simple life of children and peasants. They are often sad because they are out of tune with their time.

An English mystic, Walter de la Mare, has stressed the unseen world, for "what we see and hear is only the smallest fraction of what is." In this world, peopled by his imagination, he obtains peace of mind. He describes simply and directly his adventures in his dreamland.

These few poets may be considered representative of modern English poetry. Several others, like Robert Bridges, A. E. Housman, W. H. Davies, W. W. Gibson, and Siegfried Sassoon, have gained more than passing attention. Their best work can be found in the numerous anthologies of contemporary poetry.

Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Tristram* has been praised as the finest poem written in America. It brought him general recognition and caused readers to investigate his other poetry. They discovered that he was a descendant of Browning both in his philosophy and in his treatment of his themes. His characters are frequently failures in the eyes of the world, but from their experiences they have learned valu-

able lessons, which give them an exceptional understanding of life. Robinson is sometimes obscure because he uses an indirect method and concentrates on essentials. He is an objective writer of great restraint. Consequently his analytical studies of individuals, whether they are taken from Tilbury Town or the Arthurian legends, are sincerely profound. Because of his severity he has been called gloomy and cynical. He replies to this criticism: "The world is not a 'prison house,' but a kind of spiritual kindergarten, where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell God with the wrong blocks."

Disregarding this intellectual confusion, Robert Frost has dramatically depicted the every-day life of the New England farmers. *North of Boston* and *New Hampshire* contain realistic stories told in the common speech without any poetic figures. In his attitude toward nature he resembles Wordsworth, for he interprets with deep insight the manifestations of his rural environment. Frost is a very careful artist, writing with great reserve and concentration. His latest volume, *West Running Brook*, is, like his first, *A Boy's Will*, subjective and lyrical.

One of Frost's early admirers was Amy Lowell, the leader of the Imagists. Besides writing poetry, she has explained the aims which have governed these poets. They are to use the

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exact word, to create new rhythms, suitable for expressing new moods, to choose freely any theme, to present an image, and to write clearly and concretely. When the conventional forms hampered them, they used free verse or polyphonic prose, based principally upon a rhythmical combination of all the poetic methods of expression. Miss Lowell's poetry has intensity and color. She is concerned primarily with the vivid impressions made upon the senses by the external world. Her own remark about her poetry, "I glare," is an excellent description. Professor Lowell has collected the most characteristic poems from her eleven volumes under the title, *Selected Poems of Amy Lowell*. By her critical papers she gained for American poetry serious consideration both at home and in England. She also introduced the younger French poets to American readers.

In one of these papers she referred to John Gould Fletcher as a "virtuoso of words." By colorful words and phrases Fletcher tries to interpret his moods. One group of poems in *Goblins and Pagodas* he has called color symphonies. He allows his imagination free rein, describing with no attempt at selection whatever it presents to him. The result often confuses the reader, because the words do not have the same significance for him as they had for the

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poet. Fletcher has experimented with Japanese verse forms to obtain his suggestive effects.

Some of the most original American poetry has been the work of three poets from Illinois. When Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* appeared in 1915, it attracted immediate attention by its frankness and cynicism. The 214 epitaphs concisely revealed the tragedies resulting from hypocrisy, hate, greed, and lust in the life of a village. Masters is concerned about how modern ideas are affecting American civilization. He designated *Domesday Book* as a "census spiritual taken of our America." He pessimistically concludes that the age is one of hopeless confusion and waste. Yet he has some hope for the future because mankind is always "climbing to the light." Masters's narrative poetry frequently becomes so verbose and argumentative that it is extremely prosaic as well as boring. When he draws a character or suggests a story in a few lines, he is much more impressive, for he has little chance to philosophize.

Carl Sandburg is a propagandist, shouting about the injustices which modern methods have brought. He always sides with the under dog and with the worker against the capitalist. What he saw during his years as a laborer in towns or in the wheatfields he has powerfully recorded in *Chicago Poems*, *Cornhuskers*, and *Smoke and Steel*. He uses colloquialisms and slang to give

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his poems a realistic atmosphere. He carries on a campaign against cruelty with the ardor of a reformer. Occasionally he speaks in a more restrained voice—when he writes lyrics about nature. But he is primarily the “laureate of industrial America.”

Altho Vachel Lindsay has also attacked the evils of contemporary American life, he has chosen as his chief mission the spreading of a gospel of beauty. On several walking tours he read his poems in the villages where he stopped, because he believes that “men may be transformed by their imaginations.” He has given directions concerning how his poems are to be sung or chanted, since he writes for the ear. Sound, therefore, plays an important part in his poetry, the effect of which can only be adequately obtained by reading it aloud. When he carries his method to the extreme, he becomes extravagantly melodramatic or sentimental. Such poems, however, as *General William Booth Enters into Heaven*, *Congo*, and the negro sermons produce a powerful effect if they are read properly. Lindsay has also written some very fine lyrics about the western mountains.

For the younger American poets, among whom are Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, Conrad Aiken, William Rose Benét, T. S. Eliot, and Edna St. Vincent Millay the reader may consult Louis Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry*. Ade-

quate selections from their works are also given in several other anthologies. Within recent years contemporary American poetry has received much favorable comment because it has assumed a distinct individuality. How justified the enthusiastic praise has been, it is difficult to determine. Originality alone does not insure greatness.

In the use of free verse and polyphonic prose the American poets were following the French. Altho Henri de Régnier used free verse at times, he had an inclination for the classical perfection of form. In some ways he is more akin to the Parnassians than to the Symbolists. Yet he is modern in spirit despite his devotion to antiquity. In his lyrics he writes more personally but still philosophically.

Free verse was the most suitable form for the vivid descriptions of the Belgian poet, Émile Verhaeren. He resembles Walt Whitman in his treatment of the changes brought by the new industrial processes. He realized that the town with its factories was encroaching upon the country. He has painted realistic pictures of Belgian life before the war, but has colored them with his own imaginative vision. Verhaeren is vigorous both in language and in thought, for he is a poet of action.

The rhythmical prose used by Paul Fort for his *Ballades françaises* was the source from which the American Imagists derived their poly-



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phonic prose. In this style Fort has drawn excellent portraits ranging from Louis XI to Joffre. He tells his stories effectively, as he knows how to create the proper emotional atmosphere, whether it be humorous or pathetic. Fort's deep love for nature, particularly the scenery around Paris, is evident in the descriptive passages of the poems. Unfortunately, his style has prevented him from obtaining general recognition even in France, altho he has been called the Prince of Poets in the present generation.

Two other contemporary French poets are known at least by name outside of France. They are Paul Claudel, the French Ambassador at Washington, and Paul Valéry. Claudel is a religious poet, preaching the Christian doctrine of self-forgetfulness. Within his scope he takes the whole universe and all time, past and present. From Æschylus and the English lyric poets he has learned an exalted style, which is rare in French poetry. A French critic characterizes his verse as "the most grandiose lyrical transport of our literature." In 1921 Valéry was voted the foremost poet in modern French literature by the readers of the review *La Connaissance*. He deals with the problem of the universal mind, choosing Leonardo da Vinci as his guide. He is a philosophical and intellectual poet, who writes mainly in the classical forms

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because he believes that "the greatest liberty springs from the greatest rigor."

The other European literatures have had a similar revival of poetry during the last twenty-five years. In Italy Giovanni Pascoli succeeded Carducci and wrote intensely personal poems about his distressing experiences. His poetry is filled with the minute details which attract a child. He declares that the poet's world is the child's world of external objects. Thus he has depicted very realistically the scenes of everyday life, from the opening of the shutters at dawn to the closing of them for the night. The younger Italian poets have written the "new" poetry after the manner of the French and English poets. Their use of conversational language has been revolutionary, for Italian poetry has long been dominated by a poetic vocabulary.

Spanish and Russian contemporary poetry has not been very extensively translated; because its effect depends so largely upon the use of exact words and musical language. But from the studies of these literatures we may conclude that their poets have considered any subject suitable for poetry and have introduced new rhythms and a more natural vocabulary. The most prominent Spanish poet, Juan Ramón Jiménez, has a particular fondness for sound and color. He is an impressionist, who finds in nature a reflection of his moods. Of Alexander Blok, the most impor-

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tant figure among recent Russian poets, Prince Mirsky says: "But great tho he is, he is also most certainly an unhealthy and morbid poet, the greatest and most typical of a generation whose best sons were stricken with despair and incapable of overcoming their pessimism except by losing themselves in a dangerous and ambiguous mysticism, or by intoxicating themselves in a passionate whirlwind."

Unaffected by all these modern movements, Karl Spitteler, the Swiss poet, wrote a long epic about the Greek gods. When his *Olympian Spring* was published in 1910, he was praised as "the greatest German poet since Goethe" and compared with Homer and Milton. He has made the inhabitants of Olympus live again for the modern reader. Furthermore, his poem has the grand style suitable to his subject. In his book of essays, *Laughing Truth*, he has told the secret of his success. It is unremitting industry.

What Spitteler has to say about the future of poetry suggests that this noblest means of man's expression may attain even greater heights. "If my hopes do not deceive me, the world may one day, in favorable auspices, witness the spectacle of poets who will rival the fertility of the great painters and composers." The attention accorded to contemporary poetry should encourage young poets to accept this challenge.

### XXXIII

#### EASTERN LITERATURE

THE ideals and forms of the Eastern literatures are so different from those of the West that a brief consideration of them has been reserved for a separate chapter. All the great religions have come from the East, and the writers of that part of the world are generally philosophical and often mystical. Contemplation and meditation receive a greater emphasis than active participation in affairs. The tales teach ethical lessons, and the poetry expresses longing for a peaceful existence. The Easterner has always been conscious of the unseen world, manifestations of which he has found in nature as well as in his own soul.

After the eighteenth-century European authors became acquainted with these literatures, scholars made translations of the more famous books, such as the *Arabian Nights*. Not until the last fifty years, however, have extensive studies of them been made. The political importance of the Far East within the last decade has greatly increased the interest in Oriental ideas. To understand these peoples we must know their writings, dating from the time when Western civilization was in its infancy.

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The book which has most profoundly influenced this civilization and inspired more great music, art, and literature than any other one volume was produced during several centuries in Palestine. It is the Bible. The Old Testament was written originally in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The first part, together with the Apocrypha not included in the Protestant Bible, records the legends, laws, history, prophecy, customs, proverbs, and poetry of the ancient Jews from the creation to the time of Christ. The second contains four versions of the life of Christ, an account of the early church, twenty-one letters ascribed to Paul, Peter, and John, and The Revelation, a vision of the second coming of Christ. Because the Bible has been for nineteen hundred years the religious textbook for Christianity, its stories and teachings are so well known that no comment concerning them is necessary. Its phrases have become the common property of all nations, so that persons who seldom read the Bible quote from it without knowing the source of their words. Fortunately for us, an English translation was made by seventy scholars during the reign of James I, when the English language possessed the qualities suitable for reproducing the dignity and sonorous beauty of the original. Modern translations may be more accurate, but they will

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never surpass the authorized version in faithfulness to the spirit.

Reverence for the Bible as an inspired book has prevented many from considering it as they would other literature. Some passages, like the genealogies, are extremely dull; others are masterpieces in characterization and dramatic narrative, such as the book of Job; while the poetry of the Psalms and Song of Songs attains at times the most exalted emotional expression.

The laws and customs given in the Old Testament are explained in the *Talmud*. The rabbis who wrote this book have also included many traditions handed down orally from the time of Moses. Its twenty volumes are, therefore, a complete exposition of Judaism. A large portion of Jewish literature has been devoted to a scholarly interpretation of its teachings.

The doctrines of Mohammedanism were collected by the founder's disciples in the *Koran*, written in Arabic. Mohammed was supposed to have dictated at various times these revelations from heaven. Carlyle praised the *Koran* for its sincerity but criticized it as "a wearisome confused jumble." The endless repetitions make even the narrative sections very tedious reading.

All Arabian literature, however, is not so serious or didactic. The English title—*The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*—indicates the chief quality of *The Thousand and One Nights*. The stories

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told by Scheherezade to save her head have delighted many readers by their humor, variety, and suspense. "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," "The Adventures of Sinbad," "Aladdin and His Lamp," and the experiences of the good Caliph, Haroun-Al-Raschid, still retain their magical charm for adults as well as for children. *The Arabian Nights* gives a colorful and detailed picture of life in the Orient.

Some of Scheherezade's tales had their origin in Persian folk-lore. About 1000 A. D. Firdusi brought together these legends in his very long epic, *Shāhnāma* or *Book of Kings*. From this poem Matthew Arnold took the material for *Sohrab and Rustum*. English readers have also become acquainted with Persian lyric poetry through FitzGerald's adaptation of the *Rubai-yāt*, already mentioned in a previous chapter, and Edwin Arnold's version of part of Saadi's *Gulistān* (*Rose-Garden*). More recently, Saadi's *Būstān* (*Fruit-Garden*) and the more joyous poetry of Hāfiz have been translated. The philosophical element in Persian poetry never becomes profound enough to detract from its sensuous beauty.

Edwin Arnold also directed attention to the Hindu philosophy by his *Light of Asia*, which deals with the life and teachings of Buddha. Since Buddha's time, about five hundred years before Christ, the literature of India has been

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greatly influenced by his doctrines, based on the brotherhood of man. But in Sanskrit there exists a much older literature dating from 1500 B. C. The religious precepts of the *Rig-Veda* and the later vedas have never been wholly superseded as guides for conduct. About 300 B. C. the national epics, the *Māhabhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*, were composed. Like all Oriental epics, they are filled with strange and exaggerated but often very impressive episodes. The drama is represented in Sanskrit literature by the *Sakuntala*, the chief work of Kālidāsa. It has recently been published in Everyman's Library.

The Western mind has found the literatures of China and Japan even more difficult to understand and appreciate. The elusive quality of the Chinese lyrics and the mysticism of Oriental philosophy appeal chiefly to a contemplative people. The Western world has been too much in a hurry to sympathize with the calm attitude of such teachers as Confucius. In the fifth century B. C. this great sage preached moderation and humility with the purpose of showing people how to live peaceably with their neighbors. His disciples wrote down his sayings, which became the basis for the Chinese classics. Confucius also rendered a valuable service to Chinese literature by collecting the ancient poetry.

The golden age of Chinese poetry was the



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eighth century A. D., when Li Po, Tu Fu, and Po Chu-i wrote their exquisite lyrics. Translations from these have been made by Arthur Waley in *The Temple* and by Witter Bynner. They have the qualities we have come to associate with Chinese porcelains and ivories. With a delicate touch the Chinese poets convey the mysteries and beauties of nature.

The classics in Japanese literature were derived from China, but the lyrics reflect the spirit of the land of flowers. The poets evolved two simple forms, the *tanka*, containing five lines and thirty-one syllables, and the *hokku*, consisting of three lines and seventeen syllables. Lafcadio Hearn, who wrote several books about Japan and translated some of its poetry in his *Japanese Lyrics*, says: "The Japanese poem seems to me exactly the Japanese colored print in words—nothing much more." The two most important poets, Hitomaro and Akahito, lived in the eighth century. The American poet, John Gould Fletcher, has imitated them with considerable success in *Japanese Prints*.

Japan has also a national drama, the *No*. These plays treat historical themes in a dignified manner and have brought fame to several actors. They have, however, been forced to share their popularity with the realistic plays based on Japanese life. A few years ago Arthur Waley began the translation of an extremely long novel,

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written by a woman named Murasaski about 1000 A. D. It is a detailed account of the love affairs of Prince Genji and gives an intimate picture of court life. Since Japan has assumed a prominent place in contemporary affairs, she may have a literary revival equaling in importance that of the eighth to tenth centuries but very different from it.

The various agencies which are bringing all parts of the world nearer together are bound to have an effect upon literature. They facilitate the interchange of ideas; they permit more extensive travel; and they create a more widespread interest in other peoples. These new conditions do not necessarily mean that literature will become international. Authors will probably still obtain their inspiration from their national cultures, but they will have a broader outlook. Furthermore, they will be encouraged by the possibility of reaching a much larger audience. The numerous translations in all languages indicate that within recent years the demand for books from foreign literatures has greatly increased. It is significant that Bernard Shaw's latest play, *The Apple Cart*, was first performed in Warsaw, Poland. Eastern literature is also receiving its share of the general attention. This universal interest is gratifying because a mutual appreciation of their literatures will bring a better understanding between nations and races.

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